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ABSTRACT

A study of secondary school students' perception of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) as a postsecondary education option in Australia collected data from group and individual interviews with 597 students, 22 principals, 26 career counselors, and 101 head teachers, as well as through questionnaires administered during the interviews. The following were among the findings: (1) students generally regard TAFE as a place where one can further one's education, but few are aware that TAFE may provide diplomas or associate diplomas; (2) many young people regard enrollment in a TAFE course as a step toward independence, but also as a place for dropouts; (3) many students' main source of information about TAFE is word of mouth; (4) about 66% of teachers consider that they do not have an adequate knowledge of TAFE; (5) the majority of staff regard TAFE as a second-best alternative to university; and (6) students tend to have a more positive view of TAFE than do their teachers. A number of strategies were recommended: (1) visits of TAFE staff to schools and visits of students and teachers to TAFE colleges; (2) information pitched at appropriate levels; (3) clear information about admissions; (4) joint TAFE-university enrollment procedures; and (5) media campaign highlighting successful TAFE graduates. (The document includes 25 references and 8 appendices containing the following: questionnaires; tabulated survey responses; and TAFE enrollment data.) (CML)

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Students' perceptions of TAFE

GREG CHAPMAN &
JAN SMALLWOOD

A study of school students' views of TAFE as a post-school option

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NCVER

Adelaide 1992

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Greg Chapman
Jan Smallwood

October, 1992

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In making recommendations about new national training targets for participation and attainment, the Finn Committee drew attention to the fact that young people have a poor understanding of the education and training opportunities available to them through TAFE.[1] Many school students, it was noted, are unclear about the role of TAFE, its functions and the benefits which can arise from a vocational education. Other studies have reached similar conclusions.

The main perceptions which young people have of TAFE have been categorised along the following lines:

- Many who aspire to a tertiary education regard TAFE as being for motivated low achievers.
- TAFE is often considered to be a middle ground between apprenticeships and university for those who are undecided about what they want to do.
- Employers are perceived to have a low regard for TAFE qualifications.[2]

In general terms, distinctions are made by young people between university and TAFE—with the latter faring poorly. University is seen as being for those who are very motivated and bright, who want 'high class' careers and who choose careers which have a theoretical rather than practical base.[3]

These perceptions simply confirm the fact that there is a stronger preference for higher education amongst young people compared to vocational education. For example, it has been reported that the interest of 15- to 24-year-olds in TAFE fell from 22% to 12% between 1984 and 1990, while interest in university rose from 19% to 31% over the same period.[4]

---

1 Report of the Australian Education Council Review Committee (Finn Report) 1991, *Young people's participation in post-compulsory education and training*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

2 Australian National Opinion Polls 1990, *Community attitudes to issues affecting young people and to DEET policies and programs*; Motive Market Research 1991, *The perceptions of youth of the education system*; Jitka Mulqueeny 1990, *What works? Improving school/TAFE links.*

3 Motive Market Research 1991.

4 As cited in Keynote Address by the Hon John Dawkins MP to AUSTAFE Workshop, 'TAFE restructured: The emerging role', Sydney 1991. For further information, see ANOP 1991.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The broad aim of this study has been to investigate the perceptions which school students have of TAFE. It is about gaining an understanding of how these views may have been formed; the kinds of influences which have been involved in the process; the affect these influences may have on subsequent choices about education and training; and the relative importance which educational policy and planning can attach to these factors.

The study identifies those areas where school students, staff and parents need more information about tertiary education and training options. By improving the quality and targeting of information to such areas it will be possible to improve the basis upon which young people are making their career decisions.

Ultimately, this study will assist the development of a strategy for:

- addressing the sectoral imbalance which exists in post-compulsory education and training between the higher education system—universities—and the vocational education system—TAFE colleges;
- promoting TAFE as an equal, but more applied provider of education and training, in the tertiary education sector; and
- raising the community's perceptions/regard of TAFE as a post-school option.

1.3 Issues to be addressed

The research focussed on:

- **What perceptions exist of TAFE as a post-school education and training option amongst school students.** The intention in this case was to focus largely on the views which exist about TAFE. However, in some instances, it was necessary to consider perceptions about university.
- **How have these perceptions been developed?** Who has influenced the development of these views—friends, teachers, careers advisers, parents, principals, siblings? Does this influence change according to the age, gender, ethnicity or geographic location? How important is direct experience as opposed to 'word-of-mouth'?
- **What has influenced the development of these perceptions?** How important are media such as pamphlets, booklets, newspapers, television, films, radio and videos in influencing students' awareness of TAFE?

- **What measures might TAFE adopt in order to present itself as a more relevant and meaningful post-secondary option?**

The views of school staff were also canvassed in order to place student perceptions in the context of the school/TAFE environment. More particularly:

- What kind of perceptions do secondary school staff have of TAFE?
- How have they gained their knowledge about TAFE?
- What do they regard as being the predominant views of students about TAFE?
- To what extent have they influenced the development of these views?
- How can TAFE improve the quality of information being provided to students about their post-secondary options?

1.4 Project advisory group

The research team was guided by an advisory group made up of representatives from the Department of School Education, the Catholic Education Commission, Scots College, the University of Technology Sydney, the Chamber of Manufactures (NSW) and the NSW TAFE Commission. Regular meetings were held in order to discuss questions of research and methodology. The advisory group consisted of:

Judy Byrne (Chair)	Manager, Educational Quality Assurance, TAFE
Ian Baker	Education Officer, Secondary, CEC
Margaret Gambley	Senior Curriculum Adviser, Career Education, DSE
Sue Harvey	Chief Education Officer, EQA, TAFE
Geoff Hayton	Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Adult Education, UTS
Joe Moore	Education and Training Specialist, Chamber of Manufactures
Ian McMurtrie	Director of Studies, Scots College
John Sharpe	Chief Education Officer, Planning and Resources, TAFE

The research team also liaised with officers from the following agencies in South Australia: the Department of Education; the Department of Employment and TAFE; the Secondary Schools Accreditation Board; the National Centre for Vocational Education Research and officers from careers reference centres and the Tertiary Awareness Program.

1.5 Methodology and response

1.5.1 Participants

A number of groups influence the post-school education and training decisions made by young people. For this reason, it was decided that information about perceptions of TAFE would be collected from students, principals, careers staff and head teachers/co-ordinators.

Students In all, 597 students participated in the study. They were distributed across the following categories:

	n	(%)
Male	289	(48)
Female	305	(51)
No response	3	(1)
One parent born overseas	197	(33)
Both parents born in Australia	392	(66)
No response	8	(1)
Language other than English at home	56	(9)
No, speak only English at home	536	(90)
No response	5	(1)
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	13	(2)
Other ethnic background	579	(97)
No response	5	(1)
Live in rural area	338	(56)
Live in urban area	256	(43)
No response	3	(1)
Attend government school	482	(80)
Attend non-government school	112	(19)
No response	3	(1)

Group interviews were conducted with four students each from years 9 through to 12—making for five group interviews at each school. At the start of every interview, each student was provided with a questionnaire which took about ten to

fifteen minutes to complete. A group discussion then took place which generally lasted until the end of that period.[5]

Questionnaires were developed in consultation with the advisory group and trialled at an inner-Sydney school. A separate questionnaire was developed for Year 8 as it was considered that this group would not have had enough exposure to their post-school options to warrant detailed investigation of their views (see Appendix A for copies of the student questionnaires).

A further interview schedule was developed in order to ensure some consistency in the nature of group discussions conducted by the two researchers. This was structured around a series of issues and prompts designed to guide the discussion.

Any student participating in the study required parental consent. To ensure that males and females were equally represented, specific instructions were given about the composition of each group—being either an all-boy, all-girl or mixed group. Each school was allocated a number and then randomly assigned a year by gender profile. For example: Year 8 — four girls; Year 9 — mixed (2 boys, 2 girls); Year 10 — four boys; Year 11 — four girls; Year 12 — mixed.

Staff In all, 322 people were provided with questionnaires to complete, instructions to follow and a reply-paid envelope—149 questionnaires being returned. This represents a response rate of 46%.

	No. provided	No. returned	Response rate (%)
Principals	33	22	66
Careers advisers/ counsellors	33	26	73
Head teachers/ co-ordinators	256	101	39

Principals Each principal was asked to complete a questionnaire or was provided with a questionnaire (and reply-paid envelope) to complete at their convenience. This questionnaire had been developed, trialled and refined in such a way that it was comparable to questionnaires provided for other members of staff (see Appendix B).

[5] In the final analysis, students were fairly evenly distributed from Year 9 to Year 12.

Time permitting, personal interviews were conducted in which each principal was asked about their views of TAFE and how they saw it in terms of responding to the education and training needs of their students. These interviews generally lasted from ten minutes tc thirty minutes. It was not possible to speak to the principal at every school involved with the study.

Figure 1: Nature and extent of participation in study

METHOD / GROUP	Shortened questionnaire	Full questionnaire	Personal interview over 15 minutes	Personal interview Under 15 minutes	Group discussion	Total
Year 8	123				122	123
Year 9		123			123	123
Year 10		126			122	126
Year 11		113			109	113
Year 12		109			109	109
Principals	22		18	12		30
Careers staff		26	24	4		28
Head teacher/ co-ordinator		101				101

Note A: Three principals were not available for interview.
Note B: Three students did not nominate their year of enrolment.
Note C: Figures in total column for principals and careers staff do not necessarily mean that these members of staff returned a questionnaire and participated in an interview.

Careers advisers/student counsellors[6] Each careers adviser/student counsellor was asked to complete a questionnaire or provided with a questionnaire (and reply-paid envelope) to complete at their convenience. This questionnaire had been developed, trialled and refined in such a way that it was comparable to questionnaires provided to principals and head teachers (see Appendix C).

Personal interviews were also conducted with most careers advisers/counsellors. Time permitting, these generally canvassed a range of views related to perceptions of TAFE and the manner in which information is conveyed to students. Interviews generally lasted from twenty to fifty minutes.

Head teachers/co-ordinators[7] Careers advisers/counsellors were asked to distribute packages containing an introductory letter, questionnaire and reply-paid envelope to each head teacher/co-ordinator at their school. These questionnaires were exactly the same as those provided to careers advisers/counsellors. No attempt was made to interview this group.

Visits were made to schools between 19 May and 26 June 1992. The latter visits occurred in the second-to-last week of Term 2 in both States. **Over 700 people were involved with the study. All received assurances that their responses would be treated confidentially.**[8]

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[6] Careers advisers were interviewed in New South Wales while student counsellors were interviewed in South Australia. This reflects not only a difference in nomenclature between the States but also a difference in function—the constant being, however, that both are involved with informing students about TAFE as a post-school option. It should be noted that there may be more than one student counsellor at a school in South Australia with different responsibilities. Those dealing with TAFE matters, are often referred to as Careers Counsellors.

[7] Subject co-ordinators (in South Australia) and Head Teachers (in New South Wales).

[8] Some additional points about the methodology need to be made. Proposals were developed to:

- include parents as part of the study;
- conduct a three week follow-up of those who had not returned questionnaires. This did not take place;
- visit an isolated area of largely Aboriginal population.

All of these proposals were viewed favourably by the advisory group but decisions were made not to go ahead with them in light of the limited time and resources available for the project.

1.5.2 Selection of sites

An effort was made to ensure that a reasonable cross-section of schools was included in the study. For this reason, schools from the government, Catholic and independent sector were tentatively selected because they had been identified as having one or more of the following characteristics:

Regional educational centre with strong educational links (university and TAFE)
Rural town with a TAFE college
Rural town with no educational links
Coastal town
Established urban centre
Expanding urban centre
School with strong TAFE links
School with matriculation emphasis
School with high population of students from non-English speaking backgrounds
Urban school currently expanding its range of options
Area of high local unemployment

In choosing schools which had one (or more in some cases) of these characteristics, it was also possible to include students from a range of socio-economic environments. In all, principals at 33 schools agreed to participate—25 in New South Wales and 8 in South Australia. These schools were:

New South Wales

All Saints College, Bathurst
Armidale HS
Ballina HS
Bathurst HS
Bede Polding College, Windsor
Cabramatta HS
Doonside Technology HS
Duval HS, Armidale
Fort Street HS, Sydney
Freshwater HS, Sydney
Holy Spirit College, Wollongong
James Sheahan CC, Orange
Junee HS
Kiama HS
Kyogle HS
Lake Illawarra HS
Lismore HS
Macquarie Fields HS
Narrandera HS
Oxley HS
St Pius X College, Adamstown
St Francis Xavier College, Newcastle[9]
Tamworth HS
Trinity College, Lismore
Young HS

South Australia

Christies Beach HS
Clare HS
Elizabeth City HS
Jamestown HS
The Parks HS
Port Adelaide Girls HS
Port Pirie HS
Windsor Gardens HS

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[9] It should be noted that St Pius X College enrols students from Year 7 through to Year 10 while St Francis Xavier College enrols students in years 11 and 12.

1.6 Interpretation of data

While this project was intended to be more an exploratory case study of students' perceptions—highlighting indicative examples of views and attitudes—the number, nature and variety of respondents suggests that some results may be representative of the school population at large.

As mentioned, an effort was made to include significant numbers of students from rural and isolated areas, non-English speaking backgrounds and from the non-government school sector. The figures above suggest that this has been the case although some caution should still be exercised in interpreting the data, particularly in relation to people from independent schools—where only one school was included—and people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. While the proportion of the latter group represented is in line with their proportion in the overall population, the absolute number involved with the study is still low.

Finally, anecdotal evidence suggests that a large proportion of the schools included in the study from South Australia are located in areas of lower socio-economic status. Consequently, the results from this State may be slightly skewed towards the perceptions of those from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds. For instance, while South Australia has a higher retention rate than New South Wales, participants from that State indicated that they were less likely to complete Year 12 than their eastern counterparts.

1.7 Presentation of results

Section 2 provides a summary of major findings.

Section 3 outlines the results of the student survey. It should be noted that a large part of this section will not include a Year 8 response because participants from Year 8 were asked to complete a shortened version of the questionnaire.

Section 4 outlines the results of the staff survey. Issues raised by staff during the course of interviews or broader comments made by staff responding by questionnaire are also highlighted. It is worth mentioning that principals were asked to complete a shortened version of the questionnaire.

Section 5 presents a discussion of findings in light of the overall aims and objectives of the study. Section 6 presents strategies for action.

2 Summary of responses

2.1 Students

2.1.1 Perceptions of TAFE

- Students are aware that TAFE provides opportunities to further their education and improve job opportunities. In this sense, students perceive there is a strong link between TAFE and the labour market.

- Most students have only a *vague* understanding about what can be studied at TAFE—the most widespread response being that it is possible to study 'lots of things'.[10]

- Students generally have stereotypical views of TAFE along the lines that TAFE provides short, part-time courses related to entry-level training. They have little knowledge of the breadth and scope of TAFE provision.

- A general lack of *detailed* knowledge exists about TAFE.

- Amongst those students able to nominate particular kinds of courses offered by TAFE, many suggested courses which fall into TAFE's traditional domains. Within this group, females were more likely to nominate courses such as catering and hairdressing while males were more likely to nominate courses in mechanics and welding.

- A large proportion of students do not know that it is possible to transfer from TAFE course to a university course (71%). This was more the case amongst students in junior rather than in senior years (76% compared to 66%) and females rather than males (75% to 67%).

- Most students think that university is more highly regarded in the community than TAFE (82%). At the same time, not as many subscribe to this view in a personal sense (57%). In this context, it could be said that up to 43% of students have either not adopted the perceived views of the broader community or are still undecided on the matter.

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[10] This was the most frequent response—nominated by 197 students compared to the next most frequent response, 'word processing skills'—nominated by 70 students.

2.1.2 Sources of information

- The most important source of information about TAFE is often another person who has studied at TAFE. Parents, family, friends and acquaintances, when combined, are also major sources of information. These results suggest that the influence of word-of-mouth may have been understated in the past.

- School staff are a major source of information about TAFE but not the most frequently-cited source.

- Students generally regard printed information about TAFE as being a secondary source—their primary source, as mentioned, being people outside the school.

- Senior students were more likely to nominate school as a source of information. This suggests that they may have been more exposed to formal careers lessons and contacts.

2.1.3 Post-school intentions

- Most students intend to leave school after completing Year 12 (82%).

- Post-school education and training is a major priority amongst students.

- Most students are seeking a combination of work and study (57%) and only a few are seeking something which involves no formal education or training (less than 20%).

- Females are slightly more inclined to undertake post-school education and training (92% compared to 87% for males) and this was also the case with students from urban areas compared with those from rural areas (93% to 88%).

- Most students have a preference for university over TAFE as post-school option (59% compared to 28%).

- More females than males are interested in studying at TAFE (31% compared to 26%).

2.2 Staff

2.2.1 Views of TAFE

- Many members of staff lack the detailed knowledge necessary to develop informed views about TAFE. The most predominant view is a fairly general one—TAFE provides pre-vocational and vocational education which is beneficial to students (28% of 127).[11]

- Staff are evenly divided as to whether TAFE is for 'low achievers'. Some regard TAFE as being a more appropriate option for many students—not only for 'low achievers', (13%), whereas others consider that TAFE is a destination for the less academically-inclined (12%).

2.2.2 Sources of information

- Knowledge about TAFE amongst staff has been gained by discussion with colleagues (35%), liaison with TAFE staff (20%) and being involved with TAFE/school courses (15%).

- Many members of staff have had no direct contact with TAFE, their knowledge being gained indirectly through colleagues, careers and advertising literature. In this sense, TAFE is considered to have a rather a rather passive information strategy.

- Most staff receive less information about the TAFE sector than they do about the university sector. This is the case for both careers staff and other staff.

- Most staff consider they have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the TAFE sector. This applies more to teachers (65%) than to careers staff (38%).

- Most staff are interested in improving their knowledge of the TAFE sector (80%).

- Information is required about TAFE on such issues as courses, content, length and pattern of attendance (48%), academic and selection criteria (23%), post-compulsory options with schools/TAFE programs (17%) and the workforce outcomes from TAFE courses and employer recognition of such courses (15%).

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[11] This question was not asked of principals. Hence, the number of participants involved in this case was 127 rather than 149.

- Careers staff often feel that the information in the TAFE Handbook does not reflect actual practices and that selection criteria need to be made explicit (38% of 26 respondents).

2.2.3 Perceptions of students' views

- Students are seen to view TAFE as a worthwhile option, one which provides relevant and practical courses for employment (35% of 149 members of staff). As one member of staff commented:

  > 'They know that it offers some very useful courses. They see it as an alternative to university courses, especially if they don't achieve TERs. They view TAFE as more practical.'

- Another view students have of TAFE courses, as reported by members of staff is that TAFE provides 'second-best' qualifications (31%). Some staff members indicated students do not know how employers view TAFE qualifications. As one member of staff commented:

  > 'Many kids don't want a university education but they do recognise the importance of an award which is highly valued by employers.'

- Other views students have, staff members reported, are that TAFE courses are for those who failed entry into university courses (31%).[12]

- Staff consider that many senior students are poorly informed about TAFE (29%). The same view also applies to many junior students (42%).

2.2.4 Other views

- Staff consider that parents are the major influence on young people's career decisions. They also think that parents regard TAFE as a second-best option compared to university (over 80% of all staff).

- More careers staff consider parental influence to be instrumental in students' level of awareness about TAFE (42% of 26 members of staff). As one member commented:

  > 'All the information in the world is likely to be ineffective in face of strong parental influences to disregard it and set sights elsewhere.'

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[12] The 'concept of failure' as reported by members of staff, and the proportion who reported this, identifies an important issue to be addressed by TAFE authorities.

- Most staff consider that the community has a higher regard for university than for TAFE education.

- Whilst most careers staff do not regard university more highly than TAFE (22%), many head teachers/co-ordinators are of this view (62%).

- Vocational options in the post-compulsory years are regarded more by principals and head teacher/co-ordinators to be mainly for students unlikely to go to university (55% and 61% respectively).

3 Student response

All students (597) were asked a series of questions which explored their knowledge and understanding of TAFE. Students from Year 9 through to Year 12 (474) were then asked how they found out about TAFE, what they intended to do upon leaving school and what their attitudes were concerning TAFE and training matters.

A number of questions were open-ended and, in such cases, up to three responses were coded. Where questions contained a list of pre-coded responses, up to five responses were coded.

Only major figures are outlined in each table. Percentages represent the number of responses as a proportion of the total number of respondents.

The text generally refers to findings from the survey. Where *differences* have occurred between groups, based on factors such as gender, geographic location and type of school, these have been reported. Any information collected during the course of group discussions is clearly noted.

3.1 Perceptions of TAFE

What do you know about TAFE colleges (sometimes known as tech)? (O/E)[13]

	n	%
gain further education	211	(35)
improve job opportunities	99	(17)
gain practical or technical skills	76	(13)
study variety of courses	61	(10)
don't know much about TAFE	60	(10)
study as part of apprenticeship	50	(8)
lower entrance requirement	28	(5)
alternative to university	24	(4)
can study for Higher School Certificate[14]	24	(4)
Joint schools/TAFE courses	22	(4)

[13] Open-ended question (O/E).

[14] This response applies to students from NSW only.

Most students know something about TAFE—the most frequent response being that it is a place to gain 'further education'. Over 120 people mentioned this very term, or that: 'You can get further help in the job you want', or 'I know that TAFE offers further study courses'. At the same time, a large number of students have some notion of the vocationally-oriented nature of TAFE activities.

What do you think you can study at TAFE? (O/E)

	n	%
lots of things	197	(33)
wordprocessing skills	70	(12)
trades/apprenticeship	66	(11)
computer skills	57	(10)
mechanics	56	(9)
hospitality	46	(8)
business studies	31	(5)
sewing/fashion	29	(5)
Higher School Certificate	24	(4)
hairdressing	24	(4)
carpentry & joinery	22	(4)

'Lots of things' and 'nearly everything' were the most frequent responses. Many others suggested courses which fall into TAFE's traditional domains, such as hairdressing, sewing, cooking, secretarial skills, typewriting, metalwork, carpentry or mechanics.

Some stereotypical patterns emerged when these responses were analysed in terms of gender. Males were more likely to nominate courses such as electronics, electrical engineering, mechanics and welding. In contrast, females were more likely to nominate courses such as catering, hairdressing, sewing and secretarial.

Why do people go to a TAFE college? (O/E)		
	n	%
further their education	173	(29)
improve job prospects	171	(29)
gain a qualification	73	(12)
develop job skills	72	(12)
didn't make it into uni	51	(9)
study in a certain field	44	(7)
part of apprenticeship	29	(5)
study for Higher School Certificate	21	(4)
because of unemployment	19	(3)

The perception that TAFE courses are vocationally-oriented was again apparent as was the view that TAFE courses are quite focussed on particular jobs or positions: 'TAFE's more specialised—uni teaches you stuff you never use ... not everyone who studies psychology will become a psychologist'. To a lesser extent, a view persisted that people who enrol at TAFE either had not made it into university, had not completed Year 12 or had not been able to find a job.

3.2 Information about TAFE

Two very similar questions were asked concerning how students have found out about TAFE.

The first question was open-ended and provided students with an opportunity to nominate the source of their knowledge without any prompting. Up to three responses were coded for each participant. The second question provided a list of options and asked students to nominate those through which they had gained some knowledge of TAFE. Up to five responses were coded for each participant.

While these two questions were similar, it is important to note that each was differently structured, elicited different responses and required different treatment in terms of computer programming and analysis. Comparisons between results should be made with caution. Later analysis places more weight on sources which were identified without prompting.

How have you found out about TAFE? (O/E)		
	n	%
someone who has studied at TAFE	118	(20)
parents/family	95	(16)
friends	92	(15)
careers adviser	62	(10)
word-of-mouth	61	(10)
TAFE leaflets/pamphlets/booklets	40	(7)
school	37	(6)
teacher	32	(5)
television	26	(4)
newspapers	24	(4)
visit to TAFE college	19	(3)

When students were asked to nominate their sources of information about TAFE, the majority of responses involved information being conveyed from one person to another.

The second question provides some insight into the media and activities through which students have gained access to information about TAFE.[15]

[15] There were slight variations in the list to take into account differences between the states. For example, the South Australian questionnaire included link courses but not Joint Secondary Schools/TAFE courses. Also, it contained the Job and Course Explorer computer program but not careers markets.

How have you found out about TAFE? (C/Q)[16]		
	n	%
'other'	352	(74)
TAFE leaflets/pamphlets/ booklets	223	(47)
newspapers	167	(35)
TAFE Handbook	125	(26)
visit to TAFE college	104	(22)
careers days/nights	86	(18)
schools/TAFE/link courses	80	(17)
careers market	80	(17)
visit by staff from TAFE	78	(16)
videos	70	(15)
TAFE open days	48	(10)
TAFE information centre	42	(9)
work experience	41	(9)
doing TAFE course	40	(8)

As can be seen, 'other' was the main response to the second question. Further analysis highlights the importance of people in conveying and receiving information about TAFE as 'other' included

parents/family	70	(15)
friends	67	(14)
someone who studied at TAFE	57	(12)
careers adviser	33	(7)
brother/sister	21	(4)

In considering the responses to both of these questions, it should be noted that senior students seem to have been more exposed to formal types of careers information and contacts. Junior students were more inclined to nominate informal or 'unofficial' contacts and avenues as the source of their knowledge about TAFE.

[16] Closed question (C/Q)

3.3 Post-school intentions

3.3.1 When do you think you will leave school?

When do you think you will leave school? (C/Q)		
	n	%
Year 10	17	(4)
Year 11	7	(1)
Year 12	386	(82)
Don't know	58	(12)
No response	3	(--)

The great majority of participants were intending to leave school after completing Year 12.[17] A small group was undecided.

A slight difference emerged in terms of gender. A higher proportion of young females (85% of 244 female respondents) intend to leave school after completing Year 12 compared to young males (79% out of 227 respondents).

Students in rural areas indicated a greater inclination to complete Year 12 (84% of 268 respondents) than those from urban areas (79% of 203). Those in the latter group were more inclined to report that they did not know when they would leave (15% compared to 10%).

Also, students in New South Wales were more inclined to consider leaving after Year 12 (85% of 366 respondents) than students from South Australia (72% of 105). Those in the latter State were more inclined to report that they did not know when they would leave (23% compared to 9%).[18]

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[17] This figure stands at 82%, slightly less than the 92% of high school students in the ANOP survey who indicated that they wished to complete Year 12.

[18] It is interesting to note that the retention rate in New South Wales is actually lower than that in South Australia (61% compared to 84%) One factor to consider in this respect is the slightly larger proportion of schools included in the South Australian sample located in areas regarded as being of lower socio-economic status.

3.3.2 What do you think you will do?

What do you think you will do when you leave school? (C/Q)		
	n	%
work full-time	55	(12)
work part-time	19	(4)
study full-time	107	(23)
study part-time	8	(2)
unemployed (not looking for work)	1	(—)
unemployed (looking for work)	9	(2)
work full-time/study part-time	40	(8)
work part-time/study full-time	155	(33)
work part-time/study part-time	—	(—)
undertake apprenticeship	64	(14)
undertake traineeship	9	(2)
no response	7	(—)

Education and training emerged as a main priority amongst students. Over 80% (or 379 students out of 474) were intending to undertake some kind of further study. In nearly 60% of cases, this involved a combination of work and study. Less than 20% were intending to do something which did not involve formal education or training.

A slightly greater proportion of females (92% of 244 female respondents) were intending to study after leaving school compared to males (87% of 227). Also, females were more inclined to consider working part-time and studying full-time compared to young males (38% compared to 27%). Males were more inclined to consider undertaking an apprenticeship (22% compared to 6%).

A slightly greater proportion of students from urban areas (93% of 203 respondents) were intending to study after leaving school compared to students from rural areas (88% of 268). Also, a higher proportion of students from urban areas (39%) indicated a preference for working part-time and studying full-time compared to students from rural areas (28%).

A slightly greater proportion of students from New South Wales (91% of 366 respondents) were intending to study after leaving school compared to students from South Australia (86% of 105).

Interestingly, no student from a non-government school expected to be unemployed and looking for work after they leave school (compared to nine students from government schools).

3.3.3 Where do you intend to study after leaving school?

Where do you intend to study after leaving school? (C/Q)		
	n	%
study full-time at TAFE	32	(8)
study part-time at TAFE	75	(20)
study full-time at university	201	(52)
study part-time at university	28	(7)
study at private college	14	(4)
undecided	59	(16)

As mentioned, the vast majority of students intend to undertake further study after leaving school. University study is the most preferred option. This is the case amongst males and females, students from rural and urban areas, those living in South Australia and New South Wales and those going to government and non-government schools. It is interesting to note that, while twice as many students intend to enrol at university compared to TAFE, actual enrolment patterns indicate a quite different story. In 1990, about 24% of Australian school leavers (from 1989) enrolled at university as their first post-school destination. About 22% enrolled at TAFE. Around 45% went straight into the workforce without seeking further education.[19]

A slightly higher proportion of females indicated study at TAFE as their first preference (31% of 215 female respondents) compared to males (26% of 194). A similar preference emerged among students from rural areas—the majority of whom indicated their first preference as university (62% of 268 respondents) compared to students from urban areas (56% of 203). Again, these patterns stand in marked contrast to actual enrolment patterns where, in 1991, 985 942 students enrolled at TAFE colleges across Australia compared to the 530 096 students who studied at a university.[20]

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[19] DEET (1991b).

[20] *Australian Campus Review Weekly*, July 30-August 5, 1992

3.3.4 Do you expect to get your first preference?

Nearly 60% of students intending to undertake further study expected to get their first preference. A higher proportion of young males held this expectation (64% of 227 students) than young females (54% of 244 students).

Students from rural areas were similarly inclined—a higher proportion (63% of 268 respondents) expecting to get their first preference compared to those from urban areas (53% of 203). A higher proportion of students from New South Wales (60% of 366 respondents) expected to get their first preference compared to those from South Australia (53% of 105). Students from non-government schools were more inclined to think that they would be able to follow or pursue their first preference (67% to 57%).

It is clear that students consider university is more highly regarded by the community than TAFE (82% of 474 students). This is also reflected in another perception of community views—that TAFE is regarded as a second-best alternative to university (73%). Students themselves indicated that they regard university more highly than TAFE (57%) and that people who finish Year 12 prefer to go to university rather than TAFE (56%).

Another factor to emerge from the views outlined above is that many students are not very aware about TAFE. A large proportion, for example, did not know that it is possible to transfer from TAFE to university (71%). This was more the case amongst students in junior years than in senior years (76% compared to 66%). Similarly, many were unaware how TAFE studies are regarded by employers (61%). In conjunction with this fact it would also appear that many students did not regard, or did not know whether university studies are more closely related to the workplace than TAFE studies (47% in each case).

In general terms, males are more likely to hold the view that higher wages can accrue from studying at university. They also have a higher personal regard for university (than TAFE). In this context, males are more likely to regard completing Year 12 as a stepping stone to university than females (see Appendix D, table D.1).

In relation to junior and senior students (those from years 9 and 10 and those from years 11 and 12 respectively), the latter group indicated a greater level of awareness about post-school education and training. In some areas, senior students have more developed opinions which more often reflect a preference for university (see Appendix D, table D.2).

A higher proportion of students from rural areas perceived that the community has a greater regard for university than those from urban areas. Rural students were also more inclined to think that it is easy to get a place in TAFE (see Appendix D, table D.3).

Students from New South Wales were more inclined to regard university more highly than TAFE. Students from South Australia held this view but to a lesser extent—having a greater preference for TAFE as well as more of an understanding that it is sometimes difficult to get a place in TAFE (see Appendix D, table D.4).

Finally, it should be noted that while many students perceived university to be more highly regarded by the community than TAFE, many did not hold this view themselves (82% compared to 57%).

3.4 Other views on TAFE and training (C/Q)

Students were presented with a list of statements to which they could respond by either agreeing, disagreeing or indicating that they did not know enough about the subject.

	Yes	No	Dk (Don't know)
Is it possible to gain a professional qualification at TAFE?	320 (68)	27 (6)	123 (26)
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE.	388 (82)	29 (6)	54 (12)
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12.	78 (17)	344 (73)	48 (10)
University study leads to higher-paid jobs.	195 (42)	152 (32)	122 (26)
Is it possible to transfer from TAFE to university?	115 (24)	22 (5)	334 (71)
A university course is more closely related to what people do at work than a TAFE course.	28 (6)	223 (47)	219 (47)
People who finish Year 12 prefer to go to university rather than TAFE.	263 (56)	83 (18)	125 (26)
TAFE study is highly regarded by employers.	127 (27)	56 (12)	287 (61)
It is easy to get a place in TAFE.	153 (32)	111 (24)	207 (44)
My parents want me to go to TAFE.	80 (17)	187 (40)	202 (43)
My parents want me to go to university.	222 (47)	90 (19)	159 (34)
My parents think that university is better than TAFE.	153 (33)	119 (25)	198 (42)
Most TAFE courses are more suited to boys than girls.	27 (6)	343 (73)	100 (21)
I regard university more highly than TAFE.	269 (57)	125 (27)	77 (16)
Most people think of TAFE as a second-best alternative to uni.	344 (73)	48 (10)	78 (17)

3.5 Summary by characteristics

3.5.1 Gender: A higher proportion of females

- intend to leave school after completing Year 12 (85% to 79%);
- intend to undertake post-school education and training (92% to 87%);
- intend to study at TAFE (31% to 26%);
- do not know that it is possible to transfer from a TAFE course to a university course (75% to 67%);
- do not know how well TAFE study is regarded by employers (66% to 56%);
- do not consider that TAFE courses are more suited to boys than girls (80% to 66%).

3.5.2 Gender: A higher proportion of males

- consider Year 12 as a stepping stone to university (59% to 62%);
- consider that university leads to higher-paid jobs (47% to 36%);
- regard university more highly than TAFE (63% to 52%);
- consider that their parents regard university more highly than TAFE (37% to 29%);
- expect to the get their first preference in terms of post-school education and training (64% to 54%).

3.5.3 Gender: Comment

There were few differences by gender concerning what people know about TAFE and the reasons why someone may enrol in a TAFE course. As mentioned, some slight differences emerged between males and females in relation to the types of courses which can be studied.

It would appear that there is also a stronger preference for university among male students compared to female students. However, this is misleading simply because males and females indicated university as their first preference in roughly equal proportions (60% to 58%). It is possible that the more appropriate context in which to consider this information relates to personal confidence—more males expect to get their first preference.

3.5.4 Location: A higher proportion of rural students

- do not consider that university studies are more closely linked to the workplace than TAFE courses (52% to 42%);
- intend to leave school after completing Year 12 (84% to 79%);
- intend to enrol in a university course (62% to 56%);
- consider that their parents think that university is better than TAFE (35% to 30%);
- consider that most people regard university more highly than TAFE (85% to 79%);
- expect to get their first preference (63% to 53%).

3.5.5 Location: A higher proportion of urban students

- intend to study after leaving school (93% to 88%);
- think that it is easy to get a place in TAFE (37% to 26%);
- are aware that it is possible to transfer from a TAFE course to a university course (28% to 22%).

3.5.6 Location: Comment

There were few differences between rural and urban students concerning what people know about TAFE and the reasons why someone may enrol in a TAFE course. This also applies to the level of preference expressed for TAFE as a first option (29% to 27%).

At the same time, there is a stronger preference for university among students from rural areas and these students are also more inclined to think that they will get their first preference. Interestingly, students from rural areas are more likely to have formed a view that the nearest TAFE college represents the total range of TAFE provision and that this compares poorly with the nearest university. The extent to which this view influences their preferences is considered in section 5.

3.5.7 Year at school: A higher proportion of senior students

- are aware that it is possible to gain a professional qualification from TAFE (76% to 61%);
- do not consider that TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before the end of Year 12 (77% to 70%);
- do not consider that university studies are more closely related to the workplace than TAFE studies (59% to 37%);
- consider that people who finish Year 12 prefer to go to university rather than TAFE (63% to 50%);
- consider that university leads to higher-paid jobs (46% to 38%);
- consider that most people regard university more highly than TAFE (89% to 76%);
- consider that their parents would like them to go to university (51% to 44%);
- regard university more highly than TAFE (62% to 53%).

3.5.8 Year at school: A higher proportion of junior students

- do not know that it is possible to transfer from a TAFE course to a university course (76% to 66%);
- do not know whether they agree with statements that university studies are more closely related to the workplace than TAFE studies (54% to 38%);
- indicate TAFE as a first preference among their post-school options (31% to 26%).

3.5.9 Year at school: Comment

There were few differences between senior and junior students concerning what people know about TAFE and the reasons why someone may enrol in a TAFE course. This also applies to their preferences for university (60% to 59%) and in relation to whether they expect to get their first preference (58% to 59%).

4 Staff response

School staff were asked a series of questions about their knowledge of TAFE: how they had acquired this knowledge; their understanding of students' views; their knowledge of TAFE's information strategy; and how this could be improved.

The purpose behind this was twofold: to allow informed discussion of the context in which students' views develop; and provide some insight into the effectiveness of the current TAFE information strategy for students.

The same 12 questions were presented to principals, careers advisers, counsellors and teachers—with 8 additional questions being asked of the latter three groups. Hence, the number of respondents to some questions is 149, while for others it is 127 (Careers staff [26] Head teacher/co-ordinators [101]).

A number of questions were open-ended and, in such cases, up to three responses were coded. Where a list of options was presented to participants, up to four responses were coded.

Only major figures are outlined in each table. Also, percentage figures in these tables represent the number of responses as a proportion of the total number of respondents. Hence, total percentages vary considerably from table to table and have not been included.

4.1 Staff views of TAFE

4.1.1 What views do you have about TAFE?

What views do you have about TAFE? (O/E)				
List of responses	Careers staff		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%
relevant pre-vocational & vocational education	8	(31)	27	(27)
more appropriate options for many students	1	(4)	15	(15)
for less academic student/not for tertiary study students	-	(-)	15	(15)
organisational and educational problems with JSSTAFE	2	(8)	10	(10)
practical skills development with content-based learning	1	(4)	10	(10)
JSSTAFE/link courses worthwhile	4	(15)	3	(3)
good for interest & leisure courses	-	(-)	9	(9)
not sufficient courses are offered	1	(4)	8	(8)
teaching standard is a problem	-	(-)	7	(7)
second best, lower calibre education, lower standard	1	(4)	6	(6)

TAFE is regarded by many members of staff as being a provider of pre-vocational and vocational education courses which are of benefit to the post-school pathways of students. In this sense, it provides practical skills, content based learning and is considered to be a more appropriate option for many students.

Other views were along the lines that TAFE is a place 'for students who do not fit the academic years'. TAFE is seen by a few staff as being of a lower standard of education or a place for early school leavers.

4.1.2 How have you obtained your knowledge of TAFE?

How have you obtained your knowledge of TAFE? (O/E)				
List of responses	Careers staff		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%
discussion with colleagues	-	(-)	35	(35)
liaison with staff/teachers in TAFE	8	(31)	18	(18)
involvement with JSSTAFE timetabling/courses	5	(19)	14	(14)
newspaper/advertising	3	(12)	18	(18)
as a TAFE student	2	(8)	16	(16)
careers literature	5	(19)	15	(15)
relative/friend TAFE staff	1	(4)	14	(14)
TAFE Handbook	11	(42)	5	(5)
visit to TAFE college	9	(35)	6	(6)
careers adviser/counsellor	1	(4)	12	(12)
sought information	2	(8)	8	(8)
relative/friend TAFE student	3	(12)	6	(6)
talking with parents/students of options	-	(-)	4	(4)
worked in TAFE	-	(-)	4	(4)

Members of staff reported that they had gained their knowledge of TAFE from discussions with colleagues, liaison with TAFE staff, involvement with JSSTAFE/link courses, newspapers and other forms of advertising or from being enrolled as a TAFE student.

Head teachers and co-ordinators were more likely to have gained their understanding through more indirect means—including colleagues, friends and careers staff. In contrast, careers staff indicated that they had gained their knowledge of TAFE directly from TAFE sources.

The TAFE Handbook is the most-frequently cited source of information about TAFE for careers staff.

4.1.3 Do you consider that you have adequate knowledge about TAFE?

Do you consider that you have adequate knowledge about TAFE? (C/Q)		
	Yes	No
	n (%)	n (%)
Head teachers/co-ordinators	33 (33)	66 (65)
Careers staff	16 (62)	10 (38)
Total	49 (39%)	76 (60)

School staff felt that they have insufficient knowledge of TAFE. This is more likely to be the case amongst head teacher/co-ordinators than careers staff.

4.1.4 Would it be helpful if you could attend a staff development session about TAFE?

Would it be helpful if you could attend a staff development session about TAFE? (C/Q)		
	Yes	No
	n (%)	n (%)
Head Teachers/co-ordinators	78 (77)	20 (20)
Careers staff	23 (88)	2 (8)
Total	101 (80)	22 (17)

School staff surveyed are interested in further staff development about TAFE.

4.1.5 What would you need from this session?

What would you need from this session? (O/E)		
List of responses	Careers staff	Teachers
	n (%)	n (%)
knowledge of TAFE courses, content length & pattern of attendance	8 (31)	53 (53)
academic and selection criteria	10 (38)	19 (19)
post-compulsory options and JSST	1 (4)	21 (21)
outcome of courses/employment	6 (23)	13 (13)
opportunities	11 (42)	3 (3)
up-to-date information	2 (8)	11 (42)
recognition of TAFE qualifications	2 (8)	9 (9)
suitability of TAFE courses for students	4 (15)	9 (9)
TAFE charges and their effects		6 (6)

School staff indicated that they would like more information on TAFE courses, particularly in relation to content, levels and patterns of attendance.

Careers staff frequently reported that they had different information needs from head teachers/co-ordinators—requiring more up-to-date information on course details and outcomes. As one participant commented; 'The handbook does not provide enough information. It is difficult to advise students on entry because of lack of knowledge of criteria used'.

4.2 Information on post-school education and training

4.2.1 Do you have as much access to information about the TAFE sector as you have about the university sector?

Do you have as much access to information about the TAFE sector as you have about the university sector? (C/Q)

	Yes	No
	n (%)	n (%)
Head teachers/co-ordinators	38 (38)	60 (59)
Careers staff	12 (46)	14 (54)
Total	50 (39)	74 (58)

TAFE is generally considered to be a less active provider of information compared to universities, where it is felt that a greater effort is made to provide accurate and up-to-date information, visit schools and/or arrange other functions and activities.

One head teacher reported knowing more about university than TAFE —'through my experience as a student and universities send information. I've never received information from TAFE'.

4.2.2 How has increased retention to Year 12 affected the information that you need?

How has increased retention to Year 12 affected the information that you need? (O/E)

List of responses	Careers staff	Teachers
	n (%)	n (%)
to widen post-school options for students	6 (23)	26 (26)
to give guidance of a range of students	4 (15)	26 (26)
to widen post-compulsory options	1 (4)	30 (30)
information needs not changed	2 (8)	12 (12)
TAFE selection & admission procedures	9 (37)	4 (4)
need more TAFE information	5 (19)	9 (9)
accreditation and multiple pathways	– –	5 (5)
do not need, direct students/parents to careers staff	– –	5 (5)

While staff were asked what information they needed, many responses were couched in terms of new areas of activity or responsibility.

Staff reported that they require more information on post-school options in order to broaden their own understanding of TAFE. One member of careers staff commented; 'I have only recently become aware of the function of associate diploma courses, in the past it seemed TAFE was the apprenticeship factory'.

Information needs for some staff remain unchanged (14 respondents or 11% of staff)—mostly head teachers in NSW.

4.3 Students' perceptions of TAFE

Responses for the following includes principals, head teachers/co-ordinators and careers staff. Hence the total number of respondents increases to 149.

4.3.1 What do you think are students' overall impressions of TAFE?

What do you think are students' overall impressions of TAFE? (O/E)

Perceived views of students:	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
relevant, practical training for work	13 (50)	31 (25)
second-best qualifications	6 (23)	34 (28)
for those who failed entry to university	14 (54)	26 (21)
for trade courses	11 (42)	21 (17)
valuable educational institution	1 (4)	18 (15)
uninterested in TAFE	3 (12)	15 (12)
not very aware of TAFE	4 (15)	14 (11)
an alternative for early school leavers	2 (8)	12 (10)
for students of lower ability	– –	7 (6)

Many members of staff reported that the main views which students have of TAFE relate to it being: a worthwhile place to develop skills for employment; a provider of second best qualifications; and/or a place for students who do not gain entry to university. As one member of staff responded 'for trades or the less academic students, poorly accepted by the business community'.

4.3.2 How well-informed are students about TAFE?

How well-informed are students about TAFE? (C/Q)		
At end of Year 10	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
poorly informed	9 (35)	54 (44)
reasonably informed	9 (35)	38 (31)
sufficiently informed	4 (15)	21 (17)
well informed	4 (15)	1 (1)
uninterested	- -	3 (2)
At end of Year 12	n (%)	n (%)
poorly informed	8 (31)	35 (28)
reasonably informed	7 (27)	41 (33)
sufficiently informed	4 (15)	31 (25)
well informed	6 (23)	7 (6)
uninterested	- -	4 (3)

A general view existed that students at the end of Year 10 are less likely to be well informed about TAFE compared to students at the end of Year 12. At the same time, a significant proportion of staff do not consider Year 12 students to be well informed about TAFE in any case.

It would seem that members of staff feel there is considerable room for improvement in terms of student awareness of TAFE.

4.3.3 Could you indicate the level of influence that each of the following groups/items has on students' level of awareness of TAFE?

Could you indicate the level of influence that each of the following groups/items has on students' level of awareness of TAFE? (C/Q)		
List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
careers staff	10 (38)	68 (55)
peers	10 (38)	44 (36)
people working in area	7 (27)	28 (23)
parents	11 (42)	20 (16)
other family members	7 (27)	15 (12)
teachers	– –	17 (14)
television	3 (12)	7 (6)
newspapers	– –	6 (5)
videos	2 (7)	4 (3)

Most members of staff considered that careers advisers have the most influence on students' awareness of TAFE?[21] Peers were regarded as being the next most influential group followed by parents. Careers advisers consider parents to have the most influence and the results show differing views between them and head teachers/co-ordinators.

[21] Careers staff suggested that parents have the most influence on students' awareness of TAFE.

4.3.4 Could you indicate the level of influence that each of the following groups/items has on students' career decisions?

Could you indicate the level of influence that each of the following groups/items has on students' career decisions? (C/Q)

List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
parents	17 (65)	65 (53)
peers	9 (35)	44 (36)
careers adviser	10 (38)	31 (25)
people working in area	7 (27)	32 (26)
other family members	6 (23)	20 (16)
teachers	4 (15)	12 (10)
television	2 (8)	23 (19)
videos	1 (4)	10 (8)
newspaper	- -	8 (6)

Most members of staff considered that parents have the most influence on students career decision making, followed by peers and careers advisers.

4.3.5 'TAFE caters for the education and training needs of young males better than it does the needs of young females.' Please comment.

'TAFE caters for the education and training needs of young males better than it does the needs of young females.' Please comment. (O/E)

	Yes	No
	n (%)	n (%)
Head teachers/co-ordinators/ principals	39 (31)	62 (49)
Careers staff	17 (65)	9 (35)
Total	56 (38)	71 (48)

More members of staff consider TAFE provision caters equally for females and males. As a member of staff commented; 'I disagree. Both sexes are adequately catered for—if anything [with] females in the ascendancy'.

At the same time, careers staff are more likely to consider that TAFE provision is gender specific and indicated that many students view TAFE courses in this way. As one member of staff commented; 'Apprenticeships and trades are seen to be male areas—and female areas of work, like shop assistants, do not have TAFE courses.'

4.4 Further views about TAFE

Staff were presented with a list of statements with which they could agree, disagree or reply that they do not know. The tables outlining results are presented on the next three pages followed by a short commentary.

4.4.1 Careers staff

Careers staff (C/Q)			
	Yes	No	Dk (Don't know)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE staff are frequently able to attend information sessions at the school.	6 (24)	14 (56)	5 (20)
TAFE presentations are very professional.	14 (61)	5 (22)	4 (17)
Universities are more organised than TAFE in providing information to schools.	18 (72)	6 (24)	1 (4)
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE.	25 (100)	- -	- -
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12.	7 (29)	17 (71)	- -
JSST/link courses are mostly for students who are unlikely to go to university.	9 (36)	14 (56)	2 (8)
Parents have the most influence on a young person's career decisions.	17 (71)	5 (21)	2 (8)
Parents think that university is better than TAFE.	21 (88)	1 (4)	2 (8)
I regard university more highly than TAFE.	5 (22)	16 (70)	2 (8)
University study leads to higher paid jobs.	11 (46)	12 (50)	1 (4)
TAFE applications and enrolment procedures discourage recent school leavers enrolling.	13 (52)	6 (24)	6 (24)
Application for university is more widely understood.	18 (78)	4 (17)	1 (4)

4.4.2 Head teachers/co-ordinators

Head teachers/co-ordinators (C/Q)			
	Yes	No	Dk (Don't know)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE staff are frequently able to attend information sessions at the school.	11 (12)	37 (39)	47 (49)
TAFE presentations are very professional.	20 (21)	6 (6)	69 (73)
Universities are more organised than TAFE in providing information to schools.	54 (57)	20 (21)	22 (18)
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE.	93 (96)	3 (3)	1 (1)
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12.	34 (35)	56 (58)	7 (7)
JSST/link courses are mostly for students who are unlikely to go to university.	58 (61)	24 (25)	13 (14)
Parents have the most influence on a young person's career decisions.	61 (65)	22 (23)	11 (12)
Parents think that university is better than TAFE.	83 (86)	7 (7)	7 (7)
I regard university more highly than TAFE.	59 (62)	32 (34)	4 (4)
University study leads to higher paid jobs.	49 (51)	34 (35)	13 (14)
TAFE applications and enrolment procedures discourage recent school leavers enrolling.	28 (29)	8 (8)	59 (62)
Application for university is more widely understood.	58 (60)	16 (16)	23 (24)

4.4.3 Principals

Principals (C/Q)			
	Yes	No	Dk (Don't know)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE staff are frequently able to attend information sessions at the school.	2 (11)	7 (37)	10 (53)
TAFE presentations are very professional.	5 (25)	2 (10)	13 (65)
Universities are more organised than TAFE in providing information to schools.	16 (80)	2 (10)	2 (10)
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE.	20 (100)	- -	- -
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12.	2 (10)	16 (80)	2 (10)
JSST/link courses are mostly for students who are unlikely to go to university.	11 (55)	7 (35)	2 (10)
Parents have the most influence on a young person's career decisions.	12 (63)	5 (26)	2 (10)
Parents think that university is better than TAFE.	20 (100)	- -	- -
I regard university more highly than TAFE.	3 (15)	17 (85)	- -
University study leads to higher paid jobs.	4 (20)	14 (70)	2 (10)
TAFE applications and enrolment procedures discourage recent school leavers enrolling.	7 (35)	1 (5)	12 (60)
Application for university is more widely understood.	14 (70)	1 (5)	5 (25)

4.4.4 *Careers staff*

Careers staff consider TAFE presentation to be professional (61%) although not as organised as university efforts (72%) or as frequent as they would like (56%).

Only a small proportion of careers staff regard university more highly than TAFE (22%). In contrast, they consider that most people regard university more highly than TAFE (100%) and feel that most parents also hold this view (88%). Parents are viewed by careers staff (71%) as having the most influence on students' career decisions, also many (88%) think parents view university more highly than TAFE.

4.4.5 *Head teachers/co-ordinators*

The majority of head teachers/co-ordinators (96%) consider that most people view university more highly than TAFE and many (86%) suggest that parents also hold this view. Head teachers/co-ordinators (62%) regard university more highly than TAFE. This is quite a marked contrast to the personal views of careers staff (22%).

Many head teachers/co-ordinators (61%) think that JSSTAFE/link courses are mostly for students who are unlikely to go to university. Indications are that head teachers/co-ordinators have insufficient knowledge of TAFE presentations, many indicate they do not know if the presentations are professional (73%) or frequent (49%). Whilst some (39%) consider TAFE does not provide frequent information sessions.

4.4.6 *Principals*

All principals think that most people regard university more highly than TAFE (100%). All consider that parents think university is better than TAFE (100%), and most consider parents have the most influence on students career decisions (63%). The majority of principals (80%) do not regard university more highly than TAFE.

Principals do not consider that TAFE is mainly for early school leavers (80%), while many consider that JSSTAFE/link courses are for students who are unlikely to go to university (55%).

Only a small group of principals suggest TAFE presentations are professional (25%), whilst more do not know (65%). Similarly many principals (53%) do not know if TAFE provides frequent speakers for schools, while others (37%) suggest TAFE provision of speakers is infrequent.

4.5 Summary by characteristics

4.5.1 A higher proportion of careers staff

- obtain information about TAFE by liaising with staff/teachers in TAFE (31% to 18%);
- would like to improve their knowledge of the TAFE sector in relation to academic standards and selection criteria (38% to 19%);
- consider that TAFE provides for the education and training needs of young males better than it does the needs of young females (65% to 31%).

4.5.2 A higher proportion of other staff

- obtain information about TAFE by talking to colleagues at the school (35% to 0%);
- consider that they have insufficient understanding and knowledge of the TAFE sector (65% to 38%);
- would like to improve their knowledge of TAFE in relation to course content, length and patterns of attendance (53% to 31%);
- regard university more highly than TAFE (teachers 62%; careers staff 22%; principals 15%).

5 Discussion of findings

This section considers the aims and objectives of the study in light of information presented in sections 2 and 3 as well as that collected during the course of group discussions.

5.1 What perceptions exist of TAFE as a post-school education and training option amongst school students?

5.1.1 What do students know about TAFE?

Students generally regard TAFE as a place where you can further your education, gain professional qualifications and improve your job opportunities. This view is largely focussed on entry-level training, trades courses and/or adult and basic education programs. For example, many students regard TAFE courses as being mainly short and conducted on a part-time basis. Few are aware of TAFE provision at a diploma or associate diploma level.

Amongst the small group who were able to nominate particular types of TAFE courses, significant differences emerged based on gender. These differences can be described as follows—young males being more aware of the various trade areas, young females being more aware of the secretarial, fashion and catering-type areas.

It would seem that a largely stereotypical view of TAFE exists amongst students, with there being only a limited knowledge of the organisation and a vague idea about the types of courses and the level of training which it provides. The following types of comments were made:

> 'It's small and you go there to do practical things for Year 10 leavers.'
>
> '[TAFE is about] labouring and manual jobs and for apprenticeships—hands-on things.'
>
> '[TAFE courses] help pursue further education in specific areas. TAFE colleges have excellent facilities, e.g. cafeteria and computer rooms.'
>
> 'It's good. It's for people who didn't get educated before and they can go there.'
>
> 'University is not always suited for people wanting certain jobs, i.e. lots of people just need one skill which they can get from TAFE.'

'TAFE is like a university; school and apprentice practices all in one.'

'I have to say that I don't know much about TAFE or the courses they run. If we knew more about TAFE we'd appreciate it more.'

Group discussions revealed that most students would appreciate the opportunity to find out more about TAFE either through visits to schools by TAFE staff or visits by students to TAFE colleges. One student opined that:

'TAFE needs to give a clearer indication about what is required to get into a course, e.g. university gives the TER guidelines.'

In particular, students indicated that they would like to find out about such things as the variety of courses available at TAFE, the availability of places in a course, the college at which a course will be offered, the courses available at a particular college, course application procedures/selection criteria and cost.

In broader terms, students reported that they would like to learn more about the culture of TAFE, how it differs from school, how it compares with university, what expectations exist regarding the workload, what opportunities exist for socialising and whether it is possible to live on-campus.

From a longer-term perspective, students were interested in learning about course qualifications and outcomes: what is the qualification, what you can do with it, what it leads to, how it is regarded by employers and what has happened to other students who have done the course.

It is apparent that some very significant gaps exist in students' knowledge of TAFE. And, it is interesting to note, that these gaps were often the ones which members of staff reported having themselves—particularly in relation to the types and levels of courses available at TAFE. As a result, the information provided above identifies some areas in which TAFE authorities might choose to re-direct their attention or refine their current efforts in order to provide students and staff with a more comprehensive understanding of the organisation.

5.1.2 Why do people go to TAFE?

Students generally regard TAFE as a place to 'further your education' and 'increase your job opportunities'. In this respect, it would seem that there is a widely perceived nexus between TAFE and the labour market. During the course of group interviews it emerged that many young people regard enrolment in a TAFE course as one further step along the way to establishing an identity or lifestyle of their own. For instance, students often suggested that study at TAFE can lead to work sooner than a university course might and represents a better chance of gaining independence at an earlier age.[22]

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[22] Staff were largely in accord with these findings, that students regard TAFE as a place where it is possible to gain relevant, practical training for work.

Alternatively, there is a view amongst students that people who go to TAFE have been unsuccessful either in gaining employment or gaining entry to university. When questioned further, many students explained that TAFE is for 'drop-outs' from school while university is for people who are 'cool'. Surprisingly, many of those who made these assertions cited movies, dramas or sitcoms as their source of information. More surprising, or perhaps not, was the fact that a number of those who hold these views intend enrolling at TAFE. The reasons given related to skills, qualifications and jobs.[23]

Students also suggested other reasons why someone might enrol at TAFE. These related mostly to: cost—TAFE being seen as a more affordable post-school option[24]; entry requirements—TAFE being seen as a more achievable option in terms of Year 12 exam results; and location—TAFE colleges being seen as generally more accessible than other post-school options.

This latter point is of particular importance to students living in rural areas. For some young people, the decision to stay in town, maintain friendships and continue a familiar lifestyle was cited as a reason for enrolling at TAFE. For others, the decision to leave town opens up a whole new range of possibilities. A number of students, however, cited the lack of on-campus accommodation as a reason not to enrol at a distant TAFE college.[25]

A variety of fairly general comments from group discussions are presented below.

> 'You go to TAFE to learn what you missed out on in school.'
>
> 'You can go (to TAFE) if you have been unsuccessful somewhere (ie at university or school) and it offers some good courses.'
>
> 'You can live at home and do a TAFE course. You have to travel to a city to do a uni course.'
>
> 'Probably because they don't get the required TER or they just want a shorter length of study in order to get a certain job.'
>
> 'Because it is easier and cheaper to get into than a university.'

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[23] Again, staff confirmed the existence of such views although it is interesting to note that a larger proportion of careers staff think that students regard TAFE as place to go after missing out on university entrance than other staff (54% compared to 21%).

[24] Some students regarded university as the relatively lower cost option, the reason being that HECS can be deferred whereas the TAFE Administration Charge needs to be paid up-front.

[25] As one member of careers staff commented: 'Kids go cold if they're told that they have to go away and board with Mrs Smith at Sydney'.

'University is different from TAFE because you live with the university and go to TAFE for night/day classes. There are no other differences except costs.'

Comments such as these provide some insight into students' views about TAFE as a post-school option. To place them in a broader context, however, it might be useful to consider a few of the views which were expressed about university. Included amongst these views were:

'I think that university is more interesting because you can live there in the rooms and TAFE seems more like just school—go there in the morning then come home in the afternoon.'

'I don't know much about TAFE but university is my first choice.'

'[University] sounds better, it seems more prestigious.'

'People at uni act differently, dress differently—seem more interesting.'

'You don't really hear about people finishing Year 12 and going to TAFE. It's more the drop-outs from years 9 and 10 who go there. Everybody's promoting uni but you never hear people saying; 'Oh, you should go to TAFE.'

'I don't know much about TAFE at all. University appeals to me more at the moment, probably because I know a bit more about it and more people seem to know more about it ... although my knowledge of university study is also very limited.'

At the same time, there were some students who had not formed clear views about either TAFE or university. For example, one student commented that:

'I haven't got much knowledge on either. Unfortunately, I'm not particularly career-inclined ... I haven't done much in the way of finding out anything as I am unsure of what I want to do in the future.'

5.1.3 Have community views influenced perceptions of TAFE?

It is difficult to suggest to what extent the views of the wider community have influenced students' perceptions of TAFE or to gain an understanding about which students may be relatively more open to such influence. Nevertheless, while the large majority of students perceive that 'most people regard university more highly than TAFE' (82%), not as many hold this view themselves (57%). Furthermore, a number of students are undecided as to what their personal view is about the relative merits of TAFE and university (16%).

From the perspective of TAFE authorities, these latter results may be some of the more encouraging to emerge from this study—many students have not adopted the views which they believe are held by the community in general (43%). This group cannot be easily characterised. It is important to note, however, that it is not made up solely of students who nominated TAFE as a first preference amongst their post-school education and training options.

5.1.4 Have parental views influenced perceptions of TAFE?

In group discussions, many students reported their parents' views along the lines that 'They want me to have the opportunities they never had', or 'They both went to uni and would like to see me go there as well'. This influence was particularly evident amongst students from non-English speaking backgrounds where parents:

- were born in countries in which there is no recognised system of vocational education; and/or
- frequently compared the relative achievements of their children against those of their own ethnic peer group.

A student born in Vietnam commented that:

> '[Our parents] understand university institutions and there is the way our community sees university—it has status. And our parents did not have these things when they were young.'

Another student from a non-English speaking background expressed the view that:

> 'I haven't really given TAFE much thought due to parental reasons. Uni is the only place I can go to after Year 12.'

The second factor was also reported by students from English-speaking backgrounds. It would seem that parental influence is not only important but is often grounded in a social hierarchy of which the students themselves are quite aware. One student opined that:

> 'If your parents are both professionals if you've got parents who are high court lawyers—they're not gonna want you to ruin their name [by not going to university].'

The views of students presented above—that parents would prefer their children to go on to higher education rather than vocational education—were confirmed by staff.[26] However, some qualifications are required.

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[26] Over 85% of all staff (and 100% of teachers) considered that parents think that university is better than TAFE.

Firstly, a large proportion of students reported that they did not know what views their parents hold. This was the case in both the survey and in group discussions. As a result, the information is somewhat skewed towards those able to express some type of opinion on the matter. Others chose to make more general observations along the lines that, 'My parents don't mind what I do as long as I'm happy'.[27]

Secondly, because parents were not involved in the study, there is no way of finding out about the types of views which they do actually hold. However, student responses indicate that some parents may have a view of post-compulsory and tertiary education which is out of date. It would seem fair to say that people from an older generation have generally experienced a different education and training system, particularly in terms of the purpose of continuing school after Year 10 and the opportunities which can arise through study at TAFE. As a result, many parents may not be aware of the potential which exists for articulation between school, TAFE, university and the workplace.

5.2 How have these perceptions been developed?

5.2.1 Word-of-mouth

The main source of knowledge about TAFE for many students is people who have studied at TAFE, members of the family and friends. Amongst this group are older siblings, boyfriends, girlfriends, aunts and uncles and friends who had left school. This suggests that informal networks may have been underestimated as a source of knowledge in the past. At the same time, these informal networks may be narrowly focused, depending as they do on how well-informed the networks are about current developments in TAFE. If one takes into account the limited knowledge which students have of the organisation—for example, part-time courses of a short duration—then word-of-mouth would appear to be insufficient in itself to ensure that students have an accurate understanding of TAFE.

This is of particular importance for students in senior years who, while reporting a greater exposure to formal careers activities and materials, still cited word-of-mouth as their main source of information. The implications are readily apparent - those who might benefit from a TAFE education may miss the opportunity; those who decide to study at TAFE may make ill-informed decisions about areas to study (thus increasing attrition rates); and those who decide not to pursue a course of study at TAFE may later find that they regret their decision.

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[27] Some students from this latter group suggested that their parents also made the odd slip along the lines of 'When you go to uni...'. They felt that such statements revealed their parents' real expectations (whether intentional or not). One student said: 'The thing that you get from your parents is that you've got to go to university but you've got to choose what is best for you'.

Word-of-mouth is also an important factor in influencing community attitudes towards TAFE. Some members of staff emphasised the importance of informal networks, not only in conveying valuable information about TAFE, but in establishing/maintaining TAFE's credibility in the eyes of a community. One principal commented that:

> '[For TAFE] the biggest thing in a small country town is word-of-mouth ... university sits above the local gossip'.

Another principal commented:

> 'the approach of the TAFE teacher is critical. The people most likely to struggle adapting to TAFE are the more likely to be potential students ... word-of-mouth is critical. A bad response on JSST courses can lose a lot of potential students'.

5.2.2 *Targeted materials and activities*

Relatively few students nominated pamphlets, handbooks or careers activities as means by which they have acquired information about TAFE. However, they frequently identified these sources when provided with a predetermined list. The difference between responses to these two questions suggests that the media is a secondary source of information for students about TAFE—when given an open choice, other sources were more readily identified.

In specific terms, while the survey measured the frequency of responses, group discussions allowed for more qualitative reflection on the part of students in relation to specific TAFE media. The TAFE Handbook, for instance, was cited as an important document for finding out detailed information although it was criticised for being too dense and complex.[28]

In terms of the mass media, many students were able to identify characters in movies or television programs who attend university. In group discussions, quite positive comments were made about these characters in terms of their being 'cool', committed to study and focussed in terms of their career aspirations. Given the influence which such media have on community perceptions, it would seem that a rather positive image of university students has been conveyed in some programs /movies while TAFE's absence from the screens has hindered the development of any identifiable image. More important, perhaps, is the hidden message which is conveyed by this absence—adolescent role models attend university.[29]

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[28] Members of staff made the comment that, by its very nature, the handbook would have to be out-of-date by the time it is printed.

[29] It should be noted that in August this year, well after interviews for this study concluded, a character in the local television drama 'Home and Away' raised the possibility of taking on an apprentice in his boat repair business. (Unattributable but reliable source.)

5.2.3 School

As with specifically targeted resources, school is a secondary means for students to find out about TAFE. However, this does not mean that the attention paid to providing schools with information should be subject to a secondary kind of effort on the part of TAFE authorities—if only because TAFE cannot afford to be perceived as simply paying lip service to notions of professionalism.

Perhaps the more interesting reason, however, relates to a finding which has already been mentioned—teachers reported having the same kinds of gaps in their knowledge as students reported. As a result, it would seem quite likely that any major effort to improve teachers' levels of awareness about TAFE will surely have spin-offs in terms of students' understanding about their post-school options.

Questions concerning the environment in which information about TAFE is conveyed are addressed in section 4.3.

5.3 How does a school's culture influence the development of students' perceptions?

5.3.1 What do school staff know about TAFE?

One of the more important findings of this research is that about 66% of teachers consider that they do not have an adequate knowledge of TAFE. Only 38% of careers staff were of this view. Amongst both groups, however, it was reported that more information is required about TAFE courses, selection criteria, TAFE options for Year 11 and 12 students and employment opportunities arising from TAFE courses.[30] Comments included:

> 'I have lived in a town with a university and a TAFE for about sixteen years. During that time I have had no approaches from TAFE staff but continually uni staff approach and positively present course information, study days, practical days, open days, lectures, material on loan ...'

> 'Trying to gain a broad variety of information for Year 12 students interested in applying for TAFE courses was a real struggle. It gave the impression that each faculty was doing its own thing.'

> 'At our careers cluster meeting, staff were concerned that there had been no presentation to careers staff or students in the region. I wrote on behalf of the group, requesting such, and was refused—being told that my expectations of TAFE were too high—no one is available to come to schools.'

5.3.2 What perceptions do school staff have of TAFE?

The perceptions which emerged about TAFE in many ways reflect the low levels of knowledge which exist about TAFE. The most frequently reported perceptions were that:

- TAFE is a provider of relevant pre-vocational and vocational education.
- TAFE is a more appropriate post-school option for many students.
- TAFE is an alternative for less-academic students[31].

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[30] It is important to note that many similarities exist between the responses of staff and the responses of students not only in relation to what they know about TAFE but also concerning the type of information they require.

[31] These views were indicated by 35, 16 and 15 out of 127 respondents, respectively.

A large proportion of staff, however, do not have any clear views about TAFE at all—many suggesting that they require more information before being able to develop such views. It would seem useful, therefore, to consider some other responses which were provided concerning tertiary education. These were that:

- Most teachers regard university more highly than TAFE (62%). The figure for careers staff in this area is lower (22%).

- Most teachers think that JSST/link courses are for students who are unlikely to go to university (61%). The figure for careers staff is lower (36%).

- Most members of staff think that the community regards university more highly than TAFE (over 95%).

- Most members of staff think that parents regard university more highly than TAFE (over 80%).

In broad terms, it would seem that the majority of staff regard TAFE as a second-best alternative to university. In more specific terms, the views of careers staff and principals frequently diverged from the majority view. These groups have a greater understanding of TAFE and a heightened awareness about changes taking place in the education and training system. It could be expected that some of their views will filter down to influence teachers' perceptions in the future.[32] Comments included:

> 'TAFE should be looked at as a viable option, an equal alternative to uni ... Something's gone wrong with all this fuss in the media about people missing out on uni. Let's face it, most of them were not uni material. The focus should be on what are the alternatives.'
>
> 'Realistically, only a small percentage of those who stay on at school will get into university (and so) it's important to provide students with relevant education rather than just a piece of paper which says they're dumb.'
>
> 'There should be a system which prepares students better for the transition to Year 11 ... Start electives in Year 10 and increase students' workloads and responsibilities at this point. Allow students at the end of Year 11 to decide whether they would like to complete a vocational qualification by studying for twelve months either at TAFE, with industry or another private provider.'

Vocationally-oriented courses are seen as providing a range of benefits for students such as curricula more relevant to eventual pathways, work skills to increase job opportunities, accreditation to assist post-school education or training and an adult

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[32] Some of the views expressed by staff seemed to contain contradictory messages or, at the least, jarring overtones.

environment in which to study and possibly broaden their world view. For instance, a member of careers staff commented that:

> 'It's great to get students on campus to see TAFE, experience a classroom, [in a] campus environment. This encourages more [students] to consider TAFE as an option.'

Others opined that:

> 'Students initially thought TAFE was a soft option. But to their great surprise, the students who took electronics technology found that they couldn't cope. We got the message back from TAFE that not all students were capable of doing the course.'

> 'It's turned out that the academically inclined are just as interested in doing JSST courses as the less academically inclined.'

It was evident, however, that many teachers consider that JSST/link courses are for the less academically inclined.[33] One principal, aware of this fact, said that:

> 'There's a perception [amongst staff] that students who do JSST courses are lowering the standard or that they are simply filling in their timetable until Year 12 when they will drop it.'

While another principal was of the view that:

> 'It's a problem of status—parents will encourage their children to focus on goals with a high status and so students do courses which aren't appropriate for them. Schools offer a range of electives but the TER is marginalising a lot of vocational subjects. If this bias were removed then people would be freer to choose courses which are more appropriate to their own needs.'[34]

5.3.3 How do the views of staff influence the perceptions of students?

Given the information which has been presented, it may seem surprising that students tend to have a more positive view of TAFE than their teachers. Some of this discrepancy may be explained by the influence of word-of-mouth and the knowledge which many students gain from talking to someone who has actually

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[33] Over 60% of teachers indicated that 'JSST/link courses are mostly for students who are unlikely to go to university'.

[34] While this quote touches upon a number of particular issues, it might be worth noting that, as long as TAFE maintains a passive information strategy, questions as to whether schools can influence parents' perceptions and aspirations (for their children) or whether they simply reflect these factors are largely irrelevant.

studied at TAFE. As was reported, the findings of this study suggest that school is a secondary source of information about TAFE. It is also possible that some members of staff regarded this project as an opportunity to vent their frustrations at a TAFE system which they feel has not responded to their own information requirements and, in turn, the needs of students.

Nevertheless, some clear indications emerged that staff have a very real influence on the perceptions which students develop about TAFE—either through the views they express, the manner in which information is targeted at certain groups of students, or the values inherent in such actions. These conclusions are supported by the statements of many students which included:

> 'Mr Smith says all the time "Do you want to go to uni or become a check-out chick?".'[35]
>
> 'University's more pushed on you than TAFE and other courses.'
>
> 'TAFE is not shown to school students. Most students don't know much about TAFE at all except apprenticeships. Students should be educated earlier and more thoroughly about the courses offered by TAFE.'
>
> 'A lot of people are doing Year 12 just to do it and then decide what they'll do when they finish it. TAFE and the school could have done a lot more to make people aware [of their options].'
>
> 'More students should be made aware of TAFE options and possible career paths.'

In group discussions, many students who had gone on to Year 11 commented that because they had decided to continue past Year 10, they had not been targeted for information about TAFE in their final compulsory year. In effect, it would seem that many students who are considered by staff as likely to go on to senior years have had some of their options eliminated, on their behalf, before they have had the chance to consider such options. Many of those who had continued but were thinking about leaving in Year 11 felt that they were poorly informed about post-school vocational education and training possibilities.

When this matter was raised with careers staff, it was frequently suggested that making information available in itself is not sufficient—relying as it does on students being self-directed. Comments were often made along the lines that 'you can lead a horse to water ...' In this respect, it was evident that timing is particularly important—students must know that relevant information is available, that it is in an appropriate form and that it can be easily accessed whenever particular questions arise.

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[35] Name changed.

6 Suggested strategies

Students indicated that they would like to:

- learn more about the courses at TAFE: What is the variety available? How available are places in a course? At which college will a course be offered? What courses are available at a particular college? What are their course selection and application procedures/selection criteria? And what will it cost?

- learn more about the culture of TAFE: How does it differ from school? How does it compare with university? What expectations exist regarding the workload? What opportunities exist for socialising? And is it possible to live on campus?

- learn more about course qualifications and outcomes: What is the qualification? What can you do with it? What does it lead to? How is it regarded by employers? And what has happened to other students who have done the course?

Again, it should be noted that the information requirements reported by staff were often the same as those reported by students. It is largely in this context that the following strategies are presented.

1 **Arrangements to be made for TAFE staff to visit schools, and school students, teachers and careers staff to visit TAFE colleges, to increase awareness of TAFE-related course and career options.**

Young people require a more informed view about the nature of study at TAFE and the kind of environment which exists on campus. Anecdotal evidence emerged during the study to suggest that those who had participated in a schools–TAFE course, been involved in a 'Women and Technology' course or simply visited the local college on a fact-finding exercise had become better informed themselves as a result. However, visits by large numbers of school students can involve significant resource costs. The findings of this study suggest that a clear link exists between the knowledge of TAFE held by staff and the understanding of TAFE gained by students. This suggests that the most cost-effective solution may be to organise visits by school careers staff to selected TAFE colleges, with provision of supporting information for careers advisers to use in schools.

2 **All presentations and activities to be pitched at the appropriate level, in the right format and in a manner designed to maintain levels of interest amongst students.**

Comments by school staff suggest that TAFE needs to put more work into these areas in order to firstly, attract the interest of students—a bad presentation can mean that a lot of students actually lose interest in TAFE —and, secondly, catch-up with the high standards of work in this area undertaken by universities.

3 **TAFE to provide a clear indication of the number of places available in a course and, where appropriate, the likely selection criteria required to gain entry. This information needs to be provided in the year preceding the start of the course.**

For many students, TAFE rules itself out as a valid option by not providing them with the kind of information they require in order decide between their options.

4 **Investigations to take place regarding the feasibility of TAFE enrolment procedures being combined with university admission enrolment procedures and thereby operating on a joint basis.**

The effect may be to place TAFE and university together in students' minds —both valid options as post-school destinations. This might also be another way to draw attention to the links and pathways between TAFE and university.

5 **Extensive follow-up studies to be undertaken of TAFE graduates in order to identify their post-TAFE pathways and the occupations into which they have moved. Among the areas of enquiry might be the extent to which the ex-student considers their TAFE qualification has assisted them in finding work.**

School students indicated a real desire to find out the kinds of areas into which a TAFE course can lead. Without any major studies of pathways, it becomes impossible to satisfy school student needs in this area.

[For example, see P Mills and J Cesnich, *Occupational outlets for middle-level training: What is the future for middle-level training?*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd, Adelaide, 1992, a study of SA TAFE diploma and associate diploma courses in accounting, mechanical engineering and hospitality with graduate and employer surveys.]

6 **A media campaign to be launched which identifies some of the more 'high profile' members of the community who have studied at TAFE and gone on to earn the respect and acclaim of colleagues in their field as well as recognition by the community in general.**

Again, students were able to point to famous people who have studied at university but knew little about some of the famous people who have studied at TAFE. If this information were collected and utilised as part of an advertising campaign promoting the overall image of TAFE (rather than mainly course and enrolment information) then some of the spin-offs may become evident throughout the community—not simply amongst students).

7 **Further studies to be undertaken to assess the perceptions held of TAFE in other sections of the community. Amongst these studies could be one which looks at parents' perceptions of TAFE—possibly including parents of school students, TAFE students and university students.**

The outcomes of this study of student perceptions have provided TAFE authorities with a largely school-based perspective. Further studies would provide some insight into the broader context in which perceptions of TAFE are formed.

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APPENDIX A 1

TAFE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

ABOUT YOU:

1. How old are you? _____ years

Please tick the box which applies to you

2. Are you: Female ☐ 1 Male ☐ 2

3. Was one of your parents born overseas? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

4. Where were you born? Australia ☐ 1 Other Country ☐ 2

5. Do you speak a language other than English at home? (*Please tick only one box*)

   ☐ 1 Yes, I speak a different language at home

   ☐ 2 No, I speak only English

6. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

7. What year are you in? Y9 ☐ 1 Y10 ☐ 2 Y11 ☐ 3 Y12 ☐ 4

ABOUT TAFE:

8. What do you know about TAFE colleges (sometimes known as tech)?

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9. What do you think you can study at TAFE colleges?

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10. How have you found out about this?

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11. Why do people go to a TAFE college?

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YOUR PLANS ON LEAVING SCHOOL:

12. When do you think you will leave school?

Y9 ☐ 1 Y10 ☐ 2 Y11 ☐ 3 Y12 ☐ 4 Don't know ☐ 5

13. What do you think you will do when you leave school? *(Tick only one box)*

☐ 1 work full-time
☐ 2 work part-time
☐ 3 study full-time
☐ 4 study part-time
☐ 5 unemployed (not looking for work)
☐ 6 unemployed (looking for work)
☐ 7 work full-time and study part-time
☐ 8 work part-time and study full-time
☐ 9 work part-time and study part-time
☐ 10 apprenticeship
☐ 11 traineeship

14. Do you intend to study after leaving school? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

If yes, please rank your preferences from your first choice (number 1) to your last choice (number 6)

☐ full-time course at TAFE
☐ part-time course at TAFE
☐ full-time course at university
☐ part-time course at university
☐ course with private college
☐ undecided

15. Do you expect to get your first preference? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

FINDING OUT ABOUT TAFE:

16. How have you found out about TAFE? *(Tick as many boxes as you wish)*

- ☐ 1 Joint Secondary Schools/TAFE courses
- ☐ 2 TAFE Open Days
- ☐ 3 TAFE staff visiting school
- ☐ 4 TAFE Handbook
- ☐ 5 TAFE leaflets
- ☐ 6 TAFE Information Centre
- ☐ 7 Visits to TAFE colleges
- ☐ 8 Career days/nights at school
- ☐ 9 Careers markets
- ☐ 10 Work Experience
- ☐ 11 Part-time job
- ☐ 12 Doing a TAFE course
- ☐ 13 Videos
- ☐ 14 Newspapers
- ☐ 15 Other, please state.....

17. If a friend wanted to find out about TAFE, what would you recommend?
(Tick as many boxes as you wish)

- ☐ 1 Joint Secondary Schools/TAFE courses
- ☐ 2 TAFE Open Days
- ☐ 3 TAFE staff visiting school
- ☐ 4 TAFE Handbook
- ☐ 5 TAFE leaflets
- ☐ 6 TAFE Information Centre
- ☐ 7 Visits to TAFE colleges
- ☐ 8 Career days/nights at school
- ☐ 9 Careers markets
- ☐ 10 Work Experience
- ☐ 11 Part-time job
- ☐ 12 Doing a TAFE course
- ☐ 13 Videos
- ☐ 14 Newspapers
- ☐ 15 Other, please state.....

18. If you wanted more information about TAFE, who would you go to?
(Tick as many boxes as you wish)

- ☐ 1 Parent
- ☐ 2 Brother/sister
- ☐ 3 Friend
- ☐ 4 Teacher
- ☐ 5 Careers Adviser
- ☐ 6 Principal
- ☐ 7 Person from TAFE
- ☐ 8 Employer
- ☐ 9 Other

If other, please state.....

YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND VIEWS ON TAFE AND TRAINING:

19. We would like to find out whether you **agree or disagree** with any of the statements below.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
It is possible to gain a professional qualification at TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
University study leads to higher-paid jobs	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
It is possible to transfer from TAFE to university	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
A University course is more closely related to what people do at work than a TAFE course	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
People who finish Year 12 prefer to go to university rather than to TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
TAFE study is highly regarded by employers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
It is easy to get a place in TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
My parents want me to go to TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
My parents want me to go to university	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
My parents think that university is better than TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Most TAFE courses are more suited to boys than girls	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
I regard university more highly than TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Most people think of TAFE as a second-best alternative to university	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

20. Which statement most applies to you? (*Please tick only one box*)

☐ 1 I would like to know more about TAFE
☐ 2 I know enough about TAFE
☐ 3 I am not interested in learning about TAFE

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

APPENDIX A 2

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE - YEAR 8

1. How old are you? _____ years

Please tick the box which applies to you

2. Are you: Female ☐ 1 Male ☐ 2

3. Was one of your parents born overseas? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

4. Where were you born? Australia ☐ 1 Other Country ☐ 2

5. Do you speak a language other than English at home? (*Please tick only one box*)

   ☐ 1 Yes, I speak a different language at home

   ☐ 2 No, I speak only English

6. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

7. What do you know about TAFE colleges?

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8. What do you think you can study at TAFE colleges?

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9. How have you found out about this?

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10. Why do people go to a TAFE college?

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX B

TAFE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TAFE

PRINCIPALS' QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDENTS AND THEIR DECISIONS ABOUT TAFE:

1. Could you indicate the level of influence that each of the following groups/items has on students' level of awareness of TAFE?

	A lot of influence	Some influence	No influence
peers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
parents	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
careers advisers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
teachers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
people working in area	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
other members of family	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
television	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
newspapers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
videos	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

2. Could you indicate the level of influence that each of the following groups/items has on students' career decisions?

	A lot of influence	Some influence	No influence
peers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
parents	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
careers advisers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
teachers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
people working in area	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
other members of family	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
television	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
newspapers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
videos	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

3. In the months before the end of Y 10, how well informed are early leavers about TAFE.

☐ 1 well informed
☐ 2 reasonably informed
☐ 3 sufficient informed
☐ 4 poorly informed
☐ 5 uninterested

4. In the months before the end of Y 12, how well informed are students about TAFE?

☐ 1 well informed
☐ 2 reasonably informed
☐ 3 sufficient informed
☐ 4 poorly informed
☐ 5 uninterested

5. What do you think are students overall impressions of TAFE?

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6. "TAFE caters for the education and training needs of young males better than it does the needs of young females ". Please comment.

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TAFE AND ITS INFORMATION STRATEGY:

7. Are you aware of any of the following materials/activites/ventures?
(Tick as many boxes as you wish)

- ☐ 1 TAFE Q&A for Careers Advisers
- ☐ 2 TAFE Handbook
- ☐ 3 TAFELINK
- ☐ 4 Applying and Enrolling in TAFE
- ☐ 5 HSC and TPC Booklet
- ☐ 6 TAFE Sessions for Careers Advisers
- ☐ 7 Career Fear
- ☐ 8 Training for the Future
- ☐ 9 Fantastic Futures (video)
- ☐ 10 TAFE Information Centre
- ☐ 11 TAFE Open Days
- ☐ 12 TAFE Course Leaflets

8. Could you place a tick next to those materials etc that you have found useful?
(Tick as many boxes as you wish)

- ☐ 1 TAFE Q&A for Careers Advisers
- ☐ 2 TAFE Handbook
- ☐ 3 TAFELINK
- ☐ 4 Applying and Enrolling in TAFE
- ☐ 5 HSC and TPC Booklet
- ☐ 6 TAFE Sessions for Careers Advisers
- ☐ 7 Career Fear
- ☐ 8 Training for the Future
- ☐ 9 Fantastic Futures (video)
- ☐ 10 TAFE Information Centre
- ☐ 11 TAFE Open Days
- ☐ 12 TAFE Course Leaflets

9. Who are the people that you have found to be the best to liaise with in TAFE?

- ☐ 1 JSST Co-ordinator
- ☐ 2 TAFE teachers
- ☐ 3 Course Information Officer
- ☐ 4 Women and Girls Strategy Officer
- ☐ 5 TAFE Information Centre Staff
- ☐ 6 Principal's Unit Staff
- ☐ 7 TAFE Counsellor
- ☐ 8 Other

If other, please state.....

10. What is required on the part of TAFE staff to provide effective liaison between TAFE and school education?

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11. What are the most effective means of informing students about TAFE?

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12. In what ways could TAFE improve students' awareness about TAFE options?

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13. What additional resources could TAFE provide that would help you to promote TAFE to school students?

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FURTHER VIEWS ABOUT TAFE:

14. We would like to find out whether you **agree** with any of the statements written below.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
TAFE staff are frequently able to attend information sessions at the school	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
TAFE presentations are very professional	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Universities are more organised than TAFE in providing information to schools	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
JSST courses are mostly for students who are unlikely to go to university	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Parents have the most influence on a young person's career decisions	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Parents think that University is better than TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
I regard university more highly than TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
University study leads to higher-paid jobs	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
TAFE application and enrolment procedures discourage recent school leavers from enrolling	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Application for university is more widely understood	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

15. "Information in itself does not ensure that students are well informed about their TAFE options". Would you like to comment on this statement.

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Thank you for participating in this study.

APPENDIX C

TAFE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TAFE

HEAD TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

There is currently an unprecedented level of discussion in the community about the education and training choices available to young people. This study aims to investigate the issues associated with post-school education and training from the perspective of school students. It will assess ways of improving the nature and quality of information that is provided to them about TAFE.

We need your assistance to conduct this study and would appreciate it if you could complete this questionnaire and send it back to us in the reply-paid envelope. Should you have any questions about the questionnaire or the study itself, you might like to call Jan Smallwood or Greg Chapman to discuss the project (Ph: (02) 965 6114 or 6119). If you are calling from country areas, we can ring you back to save expense.

YOUR VIEWS:

1. Have you ever enrolled in/or ever considered enrolling in a TAFE course?

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2. Do TAFE courses come up as a topic of conversation between teachers in the staffroom?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

What views do other teachers have about TAFE courses?

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3. Do you agree with any of these views?

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4. How have you obtained your knowledge of TAFE?

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5. Do you feel that you have adequate knowledge about TAFE?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

6. Would it be helpful if you could attend a staff development session about TAFE?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

If yes, what would you need from this session?

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7. Do you have as much access to information about the TAFE sector as you do about the University sector? *(Please tick the appropriate box and comment if you wish.)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

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8. How has increased retention to Year 12 affected the information that you need?

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STUDENTS AND THEIR DECISIONS ABOUT TAFE:

9. Could you indicate the level of influence that each of the following groups/items has on students' level of awareness of TAFE?

	A lot of influence	Some influence	No influence
peers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
parents	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
careers advisers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
teachers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
people working in area	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
other members of family	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
television	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
newspapers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
videos	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

10. Could you indicate the level of influence that each of the following groups/items has on students' career decisions?

	A lot of influence	Some influence	No influence
peers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
parents	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
careers advisers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
teachers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
people working in area	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
other members of family	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
television	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
newspapers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
videos	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

11. In the months before the end of Y 10, how well informed are early leavers about TAFE.

☐ 1 well informed
☐ 2 reasonably informed
☐ 3 sufficient informed
☐ 4 poorly informed
☐ 5 uninterested

12. In the months before the end of Y 12, how well informed are students about TAFE?

☐ 1 well informed
☐ 2 reasonably informed
☐ 3 sufficient informed
☐ 4 poorly informed
☐ 5 uninterested

13. What do you think are students overall impressions of TAFE?

.....

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14. "TAFE caters for the education and training needs of young males better than it does the needs of young females ". Please comment.

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TAFE AND ITS INFORMATION STRATEGY:

15. Are you aware of any of the following materials/activites/ventures?
(Tick as many boxes as you wish)

- ☐ 1 TAFE Q&A for Careers Advisers
- ☐ 2 TAFE Handbook
- ☐ 3 TAFELINK
- ☐ 4 Applying and Enrolling in TAFE
- ☐ 5 HSC and TPC Booklet
- ☐ 6 TAFE Sessions for Careers Advisers
- ☐ 7 Career Fear
- ☐ 8 Training for the Future
- ☐ 9 Fantastic Futures (video)
- ☐ 10 TAFE Information Centre
- ☐ 11 TAFE Open Days
- ☐ 12 TAFE Course Leaflets

16. Could you place a tick next to those materials etc that you have found useful?
(Tick as many boxes as you wish)

- ☐ 1 TAFE Q&A for Careers Advisers
- ☐ 2 TAFE Handbook
- ☐ 3 TAFELINK
- ☐ 4 Applying and Enrolling in TAFE
- ☐ 5 HSC and TPC Booklet
- ☐ 6 TAFE Sessions for Careers Advisers
- ☐ 7 Career Fear
- ☐ 8 Training for the Future
- ☐ 9 Fantastic Futures (video)
- ☐ 10 TAFE Information Centre
- ☐ 11 TAFE Open Days
- ☐ 12 TAFE Course Leaflets

17. Who are the people that you have found to be the best to liaise with in TAFE?

- ☐ 1 JSST Co-ordinator
- ☐ 2 TAFE teachers
- ☐ 3 Course Information Officer
- ☐ 4 Women and Girls Strategy Officer
- ☐ 5 TAFE Information Centre Staff
- ☐ 6 Principal's Unit Staff
- ☐ 7 TAFE Counsellor
- ☐ 8 Other

If other, please state.....

18. What is required on the part of TAFE staff to provide effective liaison between TAFE and school education?

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19. What are the most effective means of informing students about TAFE?

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20. In what ways could TAFE improve students' awareness about TAFE options?

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21. What additional resources could TAFE provide that would help you to promote TAFE to school students?

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FURTHER VIEWS ABOUT TAFE:

22. We would like to find out whether you **agree** with any of the statements written below.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
TAFE staff are frequently able to attend information sessions at the school	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
TAFE presentations are very professional	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Universities are more organised than TAFE in providing information to schools	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
JSST courses are mostly for students who are unlikely to go to university	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Parents have the most influence on a young person's career decisions	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Parents think that University is better than TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
I regard university more highly than TAFE	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
University study leads to higher-paid jobs	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
TAFE application and enrolment procedures discourage recent school leavers from enrolling	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Application for university is more widely understood	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

23. "Information in itself does not ensure that students are well informed about their TAFE options". Would you like to comment on this statement.

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Thank you for participating in this study.

APPENDIX D

Table D. 1 Views of TAFE - Female and Male Students

	FEMALE						MALE					
	YES		NO		DK		YES		NO		DK	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Is it possible to gain a professional qualification at TAFE	168	69	16	7	59	24	152	67	11	5	64	28
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE	195	80	17	7	32	13	193	85	12	5	22	10
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12	34	14	179	74	30	12	44	19	165	73	18	8
University study leads to higher-paid jobs	89	36	85	35	70	29	106	47	67	30	52	23
Is it possible to transfer from TAFE to university	54	22	8	3	182	75	61	27	14	6	152	67
A university course is more closely related to what people do at work than a TAFE course	9	4	119	49	115	47	19	8	104	46	104	46
People who finish Year 12 prefer to go to university rather than TAFE	123	50	58	24	63	26	140	62	25	11	62	27
TAFE study is highly regarded by employers	55	23	28	12	160	66	72	32	28	12	127	56
It is easy to get a place in TAFE	78	32	55	23	111	45	75	33	56	25	96	42
My parents want me to go to TAFE	38	16	99	41	106	44	42	19	88	39	96	42
My parents want me to go to university	118	48	48	20	78	32	104	46	42	19	81	36
My parents think that university is better than TAFE	70	29	70	29	103	42	83	37	49	22	95	42
Most TAFE courses are more suited to boys than girls	5	2	194	80	44	18	22	10	149	66	56	25
I regard university more highly than TAFE	127	52	68	28	49	20	142	63	57	25	28	12
Most people think of TAFE as a second-best alternative to uni	176	72	23	9	45	18	168	74	25	11	33	15

Table D. 2 Views of TAFE - Junior and Senior Students

	JUNIOR						SENIOR					
	YES		NO		DK		YES		NO		DK	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Is it possible to gain a professional qualification at TAFE	152	61	16	6	80	32	168	76	11	5	43	19
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE	190	76	22	9	37	15	198	89	7	3	17	8
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12	47	19	173	70	28	11	31	14	171	77	20	9
University study leads to higher-paid jobs	93	38	87	35	68	27	102	46	65	29	54	24
Is it possible to transfer from TAFE to university	55	22	6	2	188	76	60	27	16	7	146	66
A university course is more closely related to what people do at work than a TAFE course	22	9	93	37	134	54	6	3	130	59	85	38
People who finish Year 12 prefer to go to university rather than TAFE	124	50	52	21	73	29	139	63	31	14	52	23
TAFE study is highly regarded by employers	70	28	31	12	148	59	57	26	25	11	139	63
It is easy to get a place in TAFE	79	32	57	23	113	45	74	33	54	24	94	42
My parents want me to go to TAFE	35	14	91	37	121	49	45	20	96	43	81	36
My parents want me to go to university	109	44	44	18	96	39	113	51	46	21	63	28
My parents think that university is better than TAFE	69	28	57	23	123	49	84	38	62	28	75	34
Most TAFE courses are more suited to boys than girls	10	4	180	73	58	23	17	8	163	73	42	19
I regard university more highly than TAFE	131	53	65	26	53	21	138	62	60	27	24	11
Most people think of TAFE as a second-best alternative to uni	163	66	30	12	55	22	181	82	18	8	23	10

Table D. 3 Views of TAFE - Urban and Rural Students

	URBAN						RURAL					
	YES		NO		DK		YES		NO		DK	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Is it possible to gain a professional qualification at TAFE	137	67	10	5	56	28	183	69	17	6	67	25
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE	160	79	10	5	33	16	228	85	19	7	21	8
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12	35	17	14[illegible]	71	24	12	43	16	201	75	24	9
University study leads to higher-paid jobs	84	42	68	34	50	25	111	42	84	31	72	27
Is it possible to transfer from TAFE to university	57	28	6	3	140	69	58	22	16	6	194	72
A university course is more closely related to what people do at work than a TAFE course	10	5	85	42	108	53	18	7	138	52	111	42
People who finish Year 12 prefer to go to university rather than TAFE	121	55	41	20	50	25	151	56	42	16	75	28
TAFE study is highly regarded by employers	58	29	20	10	125	62	69	26	36	13	162	61
It is easy to get a place in TAFE	53	26	57	28	93	46	100	37	54	20	114	43
My parents want me to go to TAFE	32	16	78	39	92	46	48	18	109	41	110	41
My parents want me to go to university	94	46	40	20	69	34	128	48	50	19	90	34
My parents think that university is better than TAFE	60	30	53	26	90	44	93	35	66	25	108	40
Most TAFE courses are more suited to boys than girls	8	4	145	72	49	24	19	7	198	74	51	19
I regard university more highly than TAFE	111	55	51	25	41	20	158	59	74	28	36	13
Most people think of TAFE as a second-best alternative to uni	141	69	21	10	41	20	203	76	27	10	37	14

Table D.4 Views of TAFE - NSW & SA Students

	NSW						SA					
	YES		NO		DK		YES		NO		DK	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Is it possible to gain a professional qualification at TAFE	265	73	20	5	80	22	55	52	7	7	43	41
Most people regard university more highly than TAFE	311	85	24	7	31	8	77	73	5	5	23	22
TAFE is mainly for people who leave school before Year 12	62	17	267	73	37	10	16	15	77	74	11	11
University study leads to higher-paid jobs	148	41	123	34	93	26	47	45	29	28	29	28
Is it possible to transfer from TAFE to university	87	24	18	5	261	71	28	27	4	4	73	70
A university course is more closely related to what people do at work than a TAFE course	22	6	178	49	165	45	6	6	45	43	54	51
People who finish Year 12 prefer to go to university rather than TAFE	223	61	56	15	87	24	40	38	27	26	38	36
TAFE study is highly regarded by employers	597	27	46	13	222	61	30	29	10	10	65	62
It is easy to get a place in TAFE	128	35	75	20	163	45	25	24	36	34	44	42
My parents want me to go to TAFE	56	15	152	42	157	43	24	23	35	34	45	43
My parents want me to go to university	187	51	59	16	120	33	35	33	31	30	39	37
My parents think that university is better than TAFE	132	36	89	24	144	39	21	20	30	29	54	51
Most TAFE courses are more suited to boys than girls	23	6	269	74	73	20	4	4	74	70	27	26
I regard university more highly than TAFE	216	59	99	27	51	14	53	50	26	25	26	25
Most people think of TAFE as a second-best alternative to uni	278	76	38	10	49	13	66	63	10	10	29	28

APPENDIX E 1

EDUCATION PARTICIPATION RATES for 1991

The following list shows the number of 15 to 19-year-olds in the population participation rates in education. Whilst the majority of students remain in schools, there is a significant proportion of students in this age group enrolled in TAFE. Most students in this age group enrolled in TAFE are in initial vocational courses.

	NSW %	S A %	Aust %
Apparent retention rate of secondary students to Year 12	61.4	83.5	71.3
Percentage of 15 to 19-year-olds attending:			
• School	46.4	43.5	46.2
• TAFE	20.6	15.6	19.5
• Higher education	8.6	10.7	10.2

Sources: Schools Australia 1991, Ian Castles, Australian Bureau of Statistics Commonwealth of Australia 1992.
Education Participation Rates 1991 DEET unpublished.
Selected TAFE Statistics 1991, National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd 1992
Note: In NSW students in Joint Secondary School TAFE courses are counted in both sectors.

APPENDIX E 2

GENDER & AGE PARTICIPATION IN TAFE: 1991

Participation rate for males and females in this age cohort of 15 to 19 years old differ significantly. Males are more likely to be enrolled in TAFE compared to their females peers. The major difference for this age group is that young males are more likely to be enrolled in trade courses.

TAFE population by State, gender and age group.[1]

	NSW		SA	
	n	%	n	%
Males				
15 - 19 years	55295	15.3	10235	13.8
Other males	135202	37.3	32078	43.3
Total	190497	52.6	42313	57.1
Females				
15 - 19 years	37886	10.4	6213	8.4
Other females	134091	37	25514	34.5
Total	171977	47.4	31727	42.9
TOTAL	362474	100%	74040	100%

TAFE students aged 15 to 19 by gender:

	n	%	n	%
Males	55295	59.3	10235	62.2
Females	37886	40.7	6213	37.8
TOTAL	93181	100%	16448	100%

Participation rates of 15 to 19 year olds in TAFE by gender:

Males	12.1	9.6
Females	8.3	5.8
TOTAL	20.4	15.4

[1] Students in stream 1000 courses are not included in this data.

APPENDIX F. 1

Further results from the staff survey are presented. Staffs' perceptions of other peers views are presented. School staff indicate their awareness of TAFE materials and assess the usefulness to them of these materials. In the latter lists staff indicate ways to improve students awareness of TAFE.

Other teachers' views

What views do other teachers have about TAFE courses? (O/E)

List of responses	Careers staff	Teachers
	n (%)	n (%)
relevant pre-vocational & vocational education	6 (23)	31 (31)
for less-academic students/not for tertiary study	3 (12)	17 (17)
second best, lower standard of education,	5 (19)	14 (14)
practical skills development with content-based learning	4 (15)	13 (13)
more appropriate option for many students	1 (4)	15 (15)
organisation & educational problems with JSST	3 (12)	10 (10)
interest & leisure courses	2 (8)	11 (11)
not sufficient courses offered	1 (4)	9 (9)

Members of staff perceive their peers to have similar views to their own. There are some differences: more of their peers are perceived to hold the view that TAFE study is for the less-academic student and perceived to be a second best option.

TAFE and its information strategy

Staff were surveyed to ascertain their awareness of TAFE materials and activities and asked to name the person(s) they found best to liaise with. Data from both States is presented separately, as materials and activities differ.

Response data is first presented for all staff in NSW, careers advisers (20), and other (100): principals (17), head teachers (83).

Are you aware of any of the following materials/activities/ventures?

List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE open days	17 (85)	73 (73)
TAFE Handbook	20 (100)	68 (68)
TAFE course leaflets	14 (70)	52 (52)
TAFE information centre	16 (80)	33 (33)
Applying & enrolling in TAFE	13 (65)	37 (37)
TAFElink	17 (85)	24 (24)
TAFE Q & A for careers	20 (100)	16 (16)
HSC & TPC booklet	11 (55)	15 (15)
Fantastic Futures video	14 (70)	2 (2)
TAFE session for careers staff	4 (20)	21 (21)
Training for the future	3 (15)	6 (6)
Career Fear	1 (5)	3 (3)

Staff are aware of TAFE open days and the TAFE Handbook more than other forms of materials and activities. Careers advisers indicate they have more knowledge of many TAFE materials and activities.

Indicate the materials/activities/ that you have found useful?

List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE Handbook	20 (100)	43 (43)
TAFE open days	8 (40)	25 (25)
TAFE course leaflets	9 (45)	30 (30)
TAFE Q & A for careers	17 (85)	9 (9)
TAFE information centre	5 (25)	11 (11)
Applying and enroling in TAFE	5 (25)	11 (11)
Fantastic Futures video	11 (55)	2 (2)
TAFElink	1 (5)	6 (6)
TAFE session for careers staff	4 (20)	6 (6)
Training for the future	- -	2 (2)
HSC & TPC booklet	7 (35)	5 (5)
Career Fear	2 (10)	- -

The TAFE Handbook is considered by just under a half of the staff as the most useful TAFE resource. Many commenting that there were too few available in the school. Careers staff find the handbook the most useful material they have, closely followed by the Q & A for careers.

Few careers staff are aware of any specific information session from TAFE. Of those who are aware, all respondents evaluated targeted sessions as useful. Similarly for those aware of the 'Fantastic Futures' video, many rated it as useful.

Who are the people that you have found to be the best to liaise with in TAFE?

List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
JSST co-ordinator	9 (45)	29 (29)
TAFE teacher	8 (40)	29 (29)
Course information officer	12 (60)	10 (10)
Principal's unit staff	4 (20)	12 (12)
TAFE counsellor	8 (40)	7 (7)
TAFE information centre staff	1 (5)	2 (2)
Other: Careers adviser	– –	3 (3)

In New South Wales, members of staff indicated their most frequent contact. The people they find best to liaise with in TAFE have been the teachers and the Joint Secondary School TAFE co-ordinator. The majority of careers staff (60%) liaise with the course information officer.

A 'no responses' rate was received from 30 (25%) staff, some indicating no previous contact with TAFE.

Awareness of materials/activities in SA

Responses for South Australia consist of careers co-ordinators (6), other staff (23), principals (5), co-ordinators (18).

Are you aware of any of the following materials/activities/ventures? (C/Q)		
List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE careers & courses brochures	6 (100)	19 (83)
TAFE open days	6 (100)	19 (83)
TAFE Handbook	6 (100)	16 (70)
TAFE course leaflets	6 (100)	16 (70)
Jobs and course explorer computer program	6 (100)	14 (61)
TAFE information centre	5 (83)	14 (61)

In South Australia, all members of staff indicated greater awareness of TAFE careers, course brochures and open days. Careers staff are aware of a greater range of TAFE materials and activities.

Indicate what materials/activities that you have found useful (C/Q)		
List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE careers & courses brochures	6 (100)	16 (70)
TAFE Handbook	6 (100)	10 (43)
TAFE course leaflets	4 (67)	12 (52)
Jobs and course explorer computer program	5 (83)	11 (48)
TAFE information centre	2 (33)	7 (30)
TAFE open days	3 (50)	6 (26)

In South Australia, co-ordinators consider the TAFE Careers and Courses brochures to be of more use than the TAFE Handbook. Careers staff consider the TAFE brochures and handbooks to be the most useful TAFE materials.

Who are the people that you have found to be the best to liaise with in TAFE? (C/Q))

List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE counsellor	3 (50)	7 (30)
Link course contact	1 (17)	7 (30)
TAFE teachers	1 (17)	6 (26)
Course information officer	2 (33)	5 (22)
TAFE information centre	2 (33)	3 (13)
Other: principal	2 (33)	1 (4)

Contact between schools and TAFE demonstrate some differences between the states, all members of staff indicate that the TAFE counsellor is their most frequent and best contact. The co-ordinators also nominated the TAFElink contact person.

Strategies needed to inform students about TAFE

The following responses are from careers staff (26), and other (123): head teacher/co-ordinators (101) and principals (22).

What is required on the part of TAFE to provide effective liaison between TAFE and school education? (O/E)

List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE representatives to inform staff	7 (27)	44 (36)
Develop links between school/TAFE	5 (19)	30 (24)
TAFE presentation to school students	5 (19)	21 (17)
Co-operative planning post-compulsory education	– –	17 (14)
Increase TAFE input to careers staff	8 (31)	7 (6)
Better TAFE information	6 (23)	9 (7)
Joint inservice & development	1 (4)	12 (10)
TAFE/school liaison person	1 (4)	12 (10)
Understanding learning needs senior school students	4 (15)	8 (7)
Staff visits to TAFE	1 (4)	10 (8)
Improve admission/selection procedures	8 (31)	2 (2)

It was widely suggested that 'TAFE has to start talking with teachers'. Better contact with TAFE staff was requested along with talks to staff, joint inservice on post-compulsory education and joint planning on common concerns of senior students.

Staff require more information about the value of TAFE courses, on the level of qualification and how these translate into the workforce.

What are the most effective means of informing students about TAFE? (O/E)

List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE representative to visit schools	14 (54)	60 (49)
Groups of students to visit TAFE colleges	6 (23)	30 (24)
Inform careers adviser	5 (19)	31 (25)
TAFE open days/tours	6 (23)	25 (20)
Good literature	7 (27)	12 (10)
Kits/videos	10 (38)	9 (7)
Career education	2 (8)	11 (9)
Increase JSST/link offerings	3 (12)	10 (8)
Promote TAFE by informing school staff	1 (4)	13 (11)
Organise admission procedures	4 (15)	4 (3)
Media: electronic and print	– –	8 (7)
Information sessions for parents	3 (12)	7 (6)

Increased contact with TAFE is again seen as being a priority amongst school staff. Many suggested that TAFE needs to promote the advantages arising from its courses to students. As one principal stated 'TAFE needs to study where their students get jobs and the rewards should be promoted by TAFE'

The careers staff in schools are seen as an important link between students and TAFE hence adequate liaison from TAFE is viewed as important.

What ways could TAFE improve students' awareness about TAFE options? (O/E)		
List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
TAFE representative to visit schools	7 (27)	54 (44)
Kits/videos for career education	10 (38)	15 (12)
Student groups to visits TAFE	5 (19)	21 (17)
Inform school staff	4 (15)	17 (14)
TAFE open days	2 (8)	15 (12)
Organise admission procedures	3 (12)	10 (8)
Promote in media, electronic & print	1 (4)	11 (9)
Inform students & parents	4 (15)	10 (8)
Good literature	2 (8)	9 (7)

Members of staff consider that TAFE representatives need to inform parents as well as students. The emphasis to be placed on courses and the career pathways available upon completion. Without this it was seen that TAFE would continue to be viewed as 'second rate'.

As one member of staff commented; 'Vocational education is not valued by some parents, particularly those from other cultures where vocational education does not really exist'

The provision of careers education materials with a TAFE emphasis is recommended to improve students' awareness. Use of the media to improve the community's image of TAFE and vocational education.

What additional resources could TAFE provide that would help you to promote TAFE to school students? (O/E)

List of responses	Careers staff	Other staff
	n (%)	n (%)
Kits/videos for careers education	11 (42)	30 (24)
Good literature	6 (23)	17 (14)
TAFE presentations	5 (19)	20 (16)
Inform teaching staff	- -	24 (20)
Inform students staff & parents	3 (12)	14 (11)
Student access TAFE campus	4 (15)	8 (7)
Improve organisation of admissions/selection	4 (15)	5 (4)

Members of staff indicated that TAFE kits and videos need to be developed for use in careers education classes. Literature on courses is needed to outline the area of study and possible workforce outcomes. Improved quality and quantity of TAFE presentations within schools is also necessary.

As one member of staff commented; 'Better print material, trained TAFE promotional staff, available when we need them, a better liaison system for admissions procedures and course changes'.

Better information and procedures on admissions and selection is restated frequently by members of staff. They indicate this information needs to be timely and public, as one staff replied:

> 'definitive application procedures, selection procedures to be known, no first-past-the-post-system, pick the *best* not the *quickest*'.